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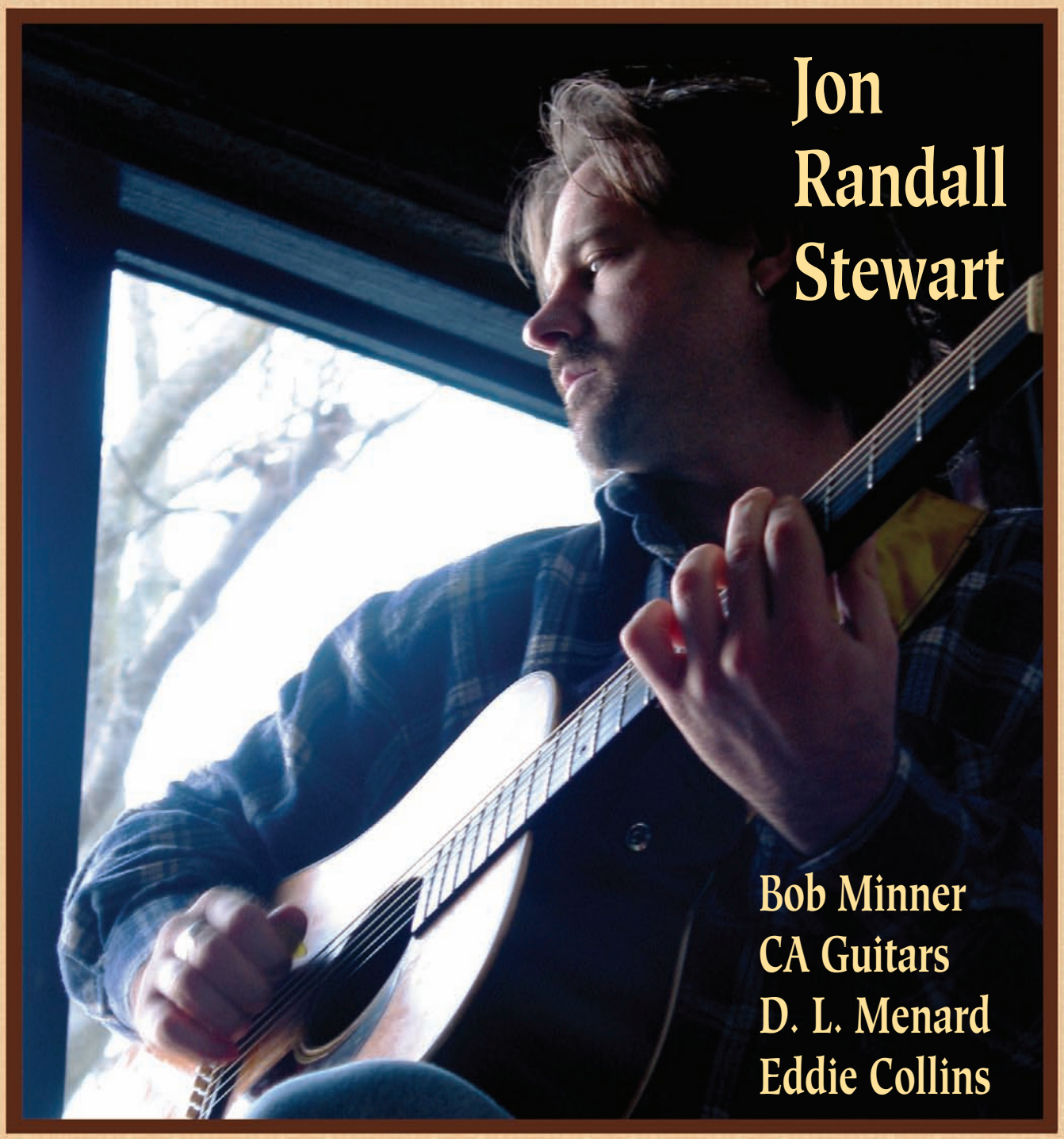
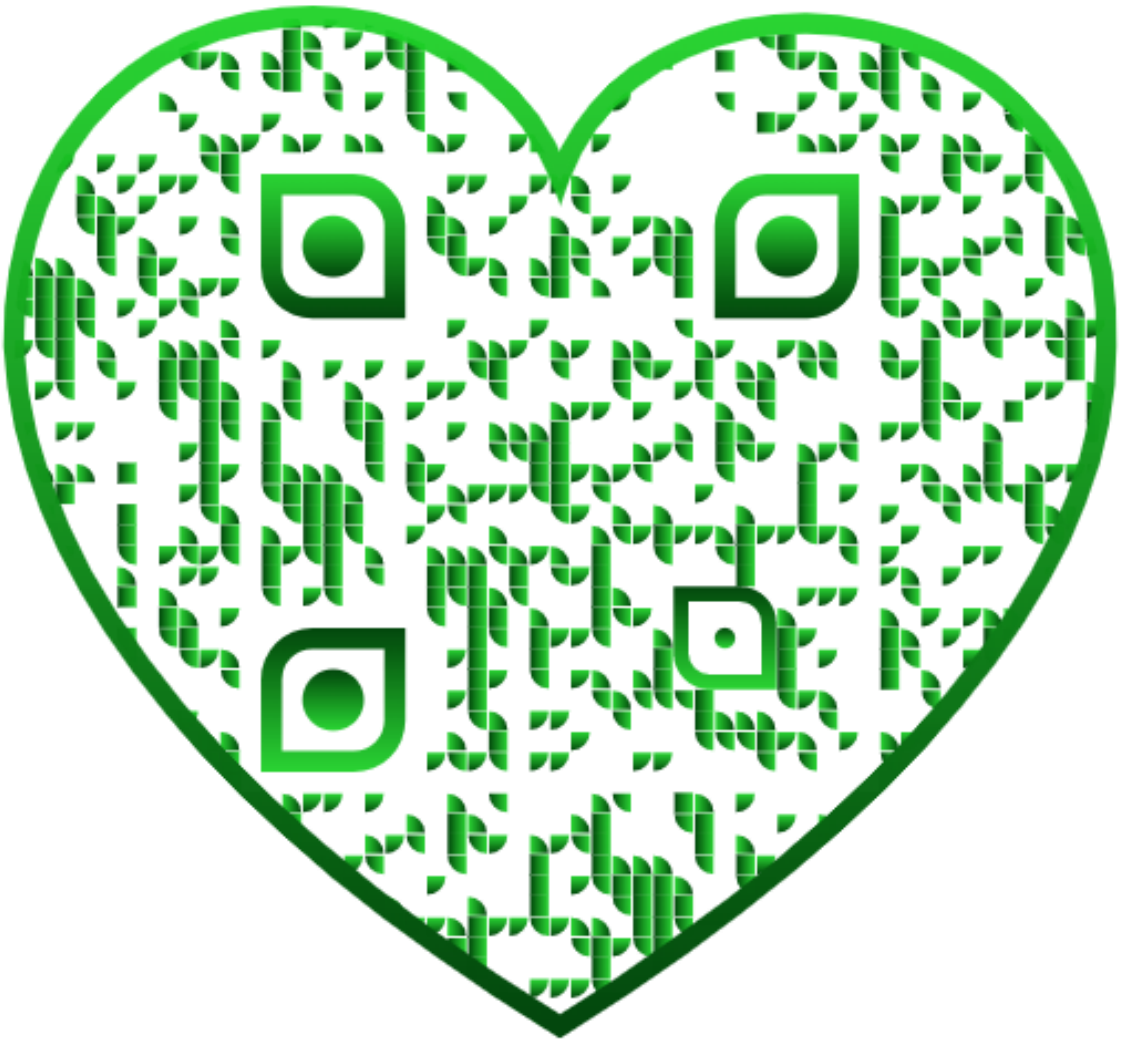
Volume 7, Number 3 March/April 2003





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Cover Photo by Dave Carney
www.carneystyle.com

How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

2. **Find distribution.** When people hear your music on the radio and want to buy the CD, will they be able to find it? If you make your CD with Oasis, they will. Here's why: Oasis clients automatically qualify for national distribution through Valley Media, the nation's largest full-line distributor. This means your CD is automatically available at all of the biggest Internet music stores: CDnow, Amazon.com, Music Boulevard, TotalE.com, etc. Your CD is also available for special-order distribution in all the big retail chains: Borders, Camelot, etc.

3. **Think "retail-friendly" when packaging your CD.** Your CD needs to look as good as it sounds. While jewel-box packaging is still very popular, as an alternative you may want to consider eye-catching **cardboard substitutes for the jewel box.** such as the patented **Oasis Jewel-Free™ Box**.

4. **Work with a reputable duplication company:**

• **Ask for references.** Who are the company's clients? Do they include artists and labels you respect? (Oasis is proud of our work, for example, with Trout Fishing in America, David Wilcox, Trapezoid, Chris Smither, Brooks Williams, Steven King, Salamander Crossing...)

• **Do they understand your music and your market?** If you're going to Kerrville for the first time, do they understand what this means? If your guitar sounds too tinny, do they know how to fix it? Nerissa Nields (The Nields) says "We love dealing with a company that knows and cares who we are. Oasis is fantastic; they manufactured our CDs in time to make sure we had them for our CD release at the Iron Horse. And the quality is superb."

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EDITOR'S PAGE

New Projects

In the last "Editor's Corner" I told everyone about the new record label that we have started and I would like everyone to know that we have recently released three new projects (or they will have been released by the time you read this).

In mid-December Brad Davis' new CD *I'm Not Gonna Let My Blues Bring Me Down* was released and since its release it has sold better than any other CD we have in our catalog. And the feedback has been extremely positive. Here is what one subscriber had to say about it.

"I just got the new Brad Davis CD in the mail, and I'm sooo stoked on it! This is the acoustic album I've been waiting for since I picked up the acoustic guitar. A brilliant fusion of rock, blues, bluegrass and hillbilly all done on acoustic instruments! As much as I love all of the progressive newgrass bands, and where they've been taking acoustic music, for me, what Brad is doing is something I hope will become a big part of the acoustic music scene and is far more appealing to me musically than a lot of newgrass stuff. Brad's playing is, as always, phenomenal, but this CD shows him in so many different lights, (and playing sooo many different instruments!) It's early yet, but this could easily be my favorite acoustic music CD of all time. Bluegrass that rocks!"

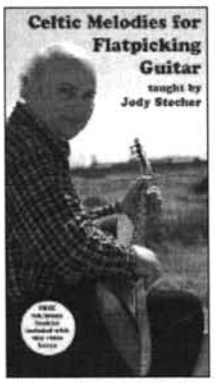
Additionally, the new John Carlini Quartet CD *The Game's Afoot* has just been released. This is an awesome acoustic jazz disc with an incredible lineup:
John Carlini/Acoustic Guitar
Don Stiernberg/Mandolin
Brian Glassman/Acoustic Bass
Steve Holloway/Drums and percussion
With special guest Pat Cloud/banjo and great liner notes by Tony Rice.

The other new release that will be available by the time you receive this issue is a project from Dix Bruce and Jim Nunally called *Brothers At Heart*. This project features Dix and Jim playing brother style duet numbers—mostly standards. If you are a fan of old standard bluegrass and traditional country tunes and like the old style brother duets (Monroe Brothers, Blue Sky Boys, Delmores, etc.) you will love this recording, and Jim and Dix both play guitar here, so there is plenty of great guitar work.

To find out more about our new releases, you can visit the new website: www.fgmrecords.com.

Bluegrass Lead Guitar
taught by Scott Nygaard

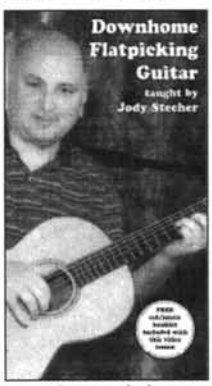
In this video, renowned guitarist Scott Nygaard guides you through the old-time fiddle tune *Little Billy Wilson*, a crosspicking arrangement of *Home Sweet Home*, a melodic solo on the blues song *Trouble in Mind* and shows you how to combine these influences when creating a solo on a bluegrass tune like *East Virginia Blues*. Scott explains in detail the techniques needed to master the bluegrass lead guitar style and the ideas behind his arrangements. All are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW604 $29.95***



Celtic Melodies for Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

The colorful tones of the guitar are well suited to the music of Ireland and Scotland. Jody Stecher has developed a unique approach to flatpicking Celtic music drawing on the sounds and techniques of the harp, fiddle and pipes. This video lesson presents a graded course starting with simpler fingering with special attention to picking techniques. Building on a base of a confident and deliberate right hand, more challenging left hand work is gradually introduced.

Titles include: ***Reel*** *Sheehan's Reel •* ***Jig*** *The Connaughtman's Rambles •* ***March*** *A Trip To Mabou Ridge •* ***Strathspey*** *The Devil In The Kitchen •* ***Reel*** *Muilleann Dubh •* ***Reel*** *Doctor Gilbert* ***GW605 $29.95***



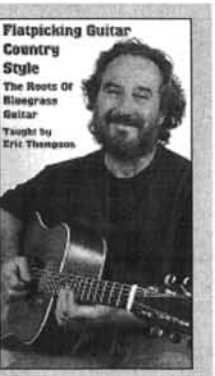
Downhome Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Jody Stecher

Jody Stecher has long been America's least generic flatpicker. This video is both a roadmap of Jody's development as a flatpicking guitarist of mostly American vernacular music, and a guide to how any flatpicker can expand their expressive technique. Think of it as *"Flatpicking According to Jody"*.

It's a graded course starting with basics in which the technical relationship between fingerpicking and flatpicking is made clear. The first few pieces are great songs with memorable melodies but minimal fingering so that right hand fundamentals can be mastered. With each new tune more techniques are introduced and more and more fingerboard is used, both horizontally and vertically. The second half of the video is purely instrumental music and the tunes are more complex.

Titles include: Carter's Blues, It's Hard To Love, I Got A Bulldog, Leake County Blues, Arkansas Traveler, The Dawn and The Ship in Full Sail ***GW606 $29.95***

Flatpicking Guitar Country Style
The Roots of Bluegrass Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson



Eric Thompson will have you flatpicking lead breaks in styles from Maybelle Carter to Doc Watson. You'll learn to pick out the melody to songs like *East Virginia Blues, Sad and Lonesome Day* and *Shady Grove*. You will learn to embellish your playing with "hammer-ons" and "pull-offs" for the real old-time country sound. You'll build a solid technique, advancing step-by-step through single note arrangements of *Thompson's Rag*, fiddle hoedowns *Arkansas Traveler* and *Soldier's Joy*, and a bluesy bluegrass break for *Good Old Mountain Dew* (employing slippery slides and hot runs). Eric's invaluable tips on left hand fingering and right hand pick technique are clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups.
GW 601 $29.95

Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes
Reels, Rags & Hoedowns
Taught by Eric Thompson

Old-time fiddle tunes are the bedrock upon which acoustic guitar flatpicking is built. Eric Thompson's strong, melodic picking has set a benchmark for taste and tone for nearly four decades. In this video Eric shares soulful arrangements of seven of his favorites, guiding you slowly, line-by-line through classics like *Texas Gals, Fish In The Millpond,* Scottish-Irish rooted *Miller's Reel* and *Stony Point,* mountain modal *Falls of Richmond,* swingin' *Kennedy Rag* and the bouncy *East Tennessee Blues.* You'll build your repertoire and hone your technique, exploring fingering patterns in six different keys which are all clearly illustrated in split-screen close-ups. ***GW 602 $29.95***

Bluegrass Crosspicking Guitar
Taught by Eric Thompson

Crosspicking is an exciting flatpicking technique that is an essential part of every bluegrass guitarist's arsenal. Utilizing repeated patterns on three-string groups, crosspicking captures the bounce of a fiddler's double shuffle and the drive of three-finger banjo Scruggs-style rolls. Eric Thompson lays it out for you in easy to understand steps, illustrating the basic patterns with arrangements of *Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss, Blackberry Rag, Beaumont Rag, Wildwood Flower,* and *Cross-eyed Fiddler.* Split-screen close-ups let you see exactly what and how Eric is playing. ***GW 603 $29.95***

Beginner's Country Guitar
taught by Fred Sokolow

All you need to put over a good country song is your voice and a guitar. This video lesson gives you the tools you need to play old-fashioned country, honky-tonk and country rock. You'll learn how to play: Accompaniment strums for different rhythmic feels; a variety of first-position chords; bass runs; major scales; solos and turnarounds. . *Tunes include: Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain, I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, The Bottle Let Me Down, I'm Movin' On, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Silver Wings and Jambalaya,* ***GW407 $29.95***

Flatpicking Country Classics
taught by Fred Sokolow

In this 75 minute video Fred teaches nine standards every country picker/singer should know... from start to finish. You'll learn an intro for each song, a backup pattern and bass runs to play while singing, an instrumental solo, and an ending. Picking up where his *BEGINNER'S COUNTRY GUITAR* video left off, Fred keeps the arrangements fairly simple but includes a few up-the-neck chord positions and hot licks. You'll learn solos and runs in five different keys. Each song is played at regular speed and then slowed down on a split-screen that gives you a close-up look at the picking hand and the chording hand.

Tunes include: New San Antonio Rose, Wild Side of Life, Waltz Across Texas, The Race is On, Beautiful Kentucky Waltz, That's the Way Love Goes, I Don't Hurt Anymore, Someone I Used To Know and City of New Orleans ***GW410 $29.95***

Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar
taught by Dix Bruce

Hot guitar licks abound these days but simple melodies played along with chord strums on the low strings of the guitar have never lost their appeal. Pioneered in the 1920s by the great Mother Maybelle Carter, this combination of lead and rhythm guitar playing is the foundation upon which all traditional country, folk, bluegrass, and hot flatpicking guitar is based. In this video lesson Dix Bruce carefully teaches lead and backup guitar to nine great and classic country, bluegrass, and folk standards, ballads and hot breakdowns played by musicians the world over.

Tunes include: Worried Man Blues, Lonesome Valley, Storms Are On the Ocean, Handsome Molly, Wildwood Flower, Redwing, John Hardy, Jimmie Brown the Newsboy ***GW308 $29.95***

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Jon Randall Stewart

The majority of today's young professional flatpickers spent their developmental years woodshedding beside a turntable or tape deck with Doc, Tony, Norman, Clarence, and Dan recordings trying their best to figure out what the great legends of flatpicking were doing. Their stagecraft as lead guitarists was then honed during years spent with local hometown bands, at family gatherings, and small festivals. Jon Randall Stewart approached his rise to lead guitar prominence in a different way. He didn't cut his lead guitar teeth in his room sitting beside a turntable; he did it in front of large audiences on stage with Emmylou Harris, starting at the age of 20, as a member of her band the Nash Ramblers.

Jon explains, "I had run into Carl Jackson in about 1990 and he told me that Emmylou was putting an acoustic band together. I sent her a tape with some singing and picking. I was primarily a singer-songwriter. I could pick a few fiddle tunes, but she had had guys like Albert Lee and James Burton playing with her, so in comparison I wasn't much of a picker. When I met with her I said, 'I'm not a lead guitar player at all.' She said, 'Well, you are now.' That first year out on the road with Emmylou was the toughest year of my life," says John. "I had to learn a lot of stuff that was beyond me." He must have learned it well, because Jon was a Grammy-winner by the age of 21 for his work on Emmylou's *At The Ryman* release.

Texas Bluegrass

Jon Randall Stewart grew up in Dallas, Texas, in a home that was filled with music. His father, a policeman, was a guitar player, songwriter, and singer. "Dad played bluegrass with a band called Earl Garner and the Bluegrass Mountaineers," Jon recalls. "We had people over the house picking every weekend." By the time Jon was six, his father had taught him how to play a few chords and Jon began to learn more about guitar playing by watching the hands of the guitar players who came over his parents' home to pick.

Although Jon enjoyed playing the guitar early on, he says, "My true talent and heart was with singing and writing songs. I started writing songs as soon as I started playing." He continues, "My dad wrote songs. Some of my earliest memories of music were listening to the songs that Dad wrote. He was a big Merle Haggard fan and my mom liked Gordon Lightfoot. There was a lot of music in the house." There was a great guitar too: Jon's dad owned a 1946 Martin D-28, which was the guitar Jon used when learning his first chords.

Written by Dan Miller

By the time Jon was 14 he was playing in a bluegrass band with Carl Shiflett. Jon recalls, "Carl was from Waco and I wasn't old enough to drive so he would come pick me up after school and we would go play a show or festival." Jon continued the gig with Carl Shiflett's band through his high school years, but also played in a heavy metal rock band. Jon laughs, "In high school I was musically schizophrenic." With Carl's band Jon mostly played rhythm guitar and sang vocals, but also played a little lead guitar. He says, "Tony Rice was really hot back then and so guitar players in bluegrass bands were having to learn how to flatpick. I learned how to take a couple of solos here and there on guitar and I also switched off on mandolin now and then."

When Jon was in sixth or seventh grade he met and became friends with a young pair of Texas bluegrass players, Brad and Greg Davis. Brad recalls, "We used to see Jon at all the little Texas festivals. We'd camp out for the weekend and pick for hours." By 1987, when Jon graduated from high school, Brad Davis had already made the move to Nashville and was playing with the Forrester Sisters. Jon was eager to follow and Brad invited him to come to town and move in with him. Directly after high school graduation Jon went to visit Brad. Brad told John that he knew a country artist who had signed with a major label in Nashville and needed a bass player that could sing harmony. Jon went back to Texas, sold his electric guitar to buy a bass, learned how to play it and then went back to Nashville only to find that the deal had fallen through. He spent his first year in Nashville working odd jobs to help pay the rent.

The Sideman

In 1989 Jon met Brent Truitt at the Station Inn. At the time Brent was in Holly Dunn's band and told Jon that Holly was looking for an acoustic guitar player. Jon passed his first audition for Holly Dunn's band, playing the Grand Ole Opry on its 20th anniversary celebration. During the summer of that year he went out on the road with Holly touring Alaska and Japan. He said that he played some lead guitar with Holly, but most of it involved learning Mark Cassteven's solos from recordings and playing them in the show.

By 1990, Jon got the job with Emmylou Harris. Playing alongside musicians like Al Perkins, Sam Bush, Larry Atamanuik, and Roy Huskey, Jr., he remembers, "I really had to dig in." Jon's dad had taught him to pick a few tunes, like "Gold Rush" and "Wildwood Flower," and he'd picked up a few other fiddle tunes along the way, but he says, "That first year with Emmylou I spent a lot of time having other people show me stuff. I was asking advice from everyone and I was open to constructive criticism. I was young and in over my head, so it was better for me to take the criticism and learn from it." Jon points to Sam Bush and Al Perkins as two people who helped him a lot during that first year.

Sam Bush not only gave Jon ideas about what to play, but also gave him some general advice about how to approach soloing. Jon recalls, "When I started with Emmylou, Sam looked at me and said, 'Breathe!' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'You hold your breath when you're playing and you play notes continuously through your whole solo, so you're holding your breath the entire time. You need to breathe!' I'm still learning how to stop, pause, take a breath, and jump back in. Bluegrass guys are used to ripping every note and playing every lick they know. I don't think it would hurt any flatpickers to listen to people like Clapton or Freddie King and incorporate what they do. Sam is the biggest Clapton fan on the planet and it shows in his guitar playing and in his mandolin playing too."

When asked about his learning process during that first year with Emmylou, Jon said, "Sam or Al, or Richard Bennett [EmmyLou's producer, not to be confused with the bluegrass guitarist of the same name] would show me little things and I would doodle with it and figure out a way I could use it. If I got stuck with something, then I'd ask. I still do that. Sometimes I'll hear someone like Bryan Sutton play something and I'll say, 'Hey, what the hell did you just play?'"

Major Label Hell

Jon stayed with Emmylou's band for five years, but his heart was still set on having his own career as a singer-songwriter. While he was with Emmylou, Sam Bush and producer Garth Fundis (who produced Don Williams, Keith Whitley, and Newgrass Revival, to name a few) had produced a couple of sides for Jon. RCA heard the recordings and signed Jon to a record deal. His solo career as an RCA Records artist began in 1994 with the release of *What You Don't Know*. This recording featured compositions by respected artists and writers including Russell Smith, Carl Jackson, Jim Lauderdale, Vince Melamend, Kevin Welch and Jeff Black, as well as Jon's own material. The recording also featured guest appearances from Emmylou Harris, the Nash Ramblers, Trisha Yearwood, and Vince Gill. To promote his new release Jon

Photo: John Lee

Jon Randall Stewart on stage at Merlefest with Emmylou Harris, 1995

Photo: Don Shorock

John Randall Stewart on stage with Sam Bush at Byron Berline's Festival in Guthrie, OK

toured the United Kingdom as an opening act for Mary Chapin Carpenter in 1994.

Jon recorded a second album for RCA, but it was never released. He then signed with Asylum and recorded a very promising record, *Cold Coffee Morning*, which featured Jon's songwriting on five of the eleven songs. Lorrie Morgan, Emmylou Harris, and Willie Nelson sang with Jon on the record. Asylum released a few singles from *Cold Coffee Morning*. However, despite considerable airplay of the single "She Don't Believe in Fairytales," the album was pulled before its release date due to financial troubles and upheaval at Asylum.

Jon recalls, "I ended up in major label hell battling to do stuff I wanted to do and trying to make radio happy. Country music has this box that you are not supposed to get out of and I didn't want to stay in it." He continues "I think you need to be honest. People know the difference. So a song needs to touch you or make you feel something before you can make someone else believe it. Emmylou was always very particular about the songs she did and what they meant to her, and I never heard her say, 'I'll record this one, it's a hit!'"

After experiencing the frustrations of trying to fit into "country music's box," Jon was ready to record his songs his way. His friend Brent Truitt was putting together a recording studio in Nashville and Jon went in and laid down some rough tracks to help Brent get the studio together, work the bugs out, and learn how to use the new gear. Jon said, "I went in to the studio with Roy Huskey, Jr. and Larry Atamanuik. We put down the basic tracks to songs that we knew we couldn't put on a major label." The basic tracks for those songs laid around for 3 or 4 years until the independent label Eminent Records talked with Jon about putting out a new solo album. Instead of starting over from scratch, Jon took those basic tracks and invited friends like Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush, John Cowan, Lorrie Morgan, Al Perkins, and Emmylou Harris to help him finish the project, which Eminent released as the CD *Willin'*. Unfortunately, shortly after releasing that CD Eminent Records went bankrupt. Fortunately, the excellent *Willin'* CD is still available.

Jon wrote all but one of the tunes that appear on *Willin'*. Regarding his writing on this project he states, "As Steve Earle said, 'I'm not always feeling happy midtempo positive.' That's real. I didn't worry with this record, 'Is this song too deep?' Nobody did. This time, I made the record I wanted for me, not for what might get on the radio, not for what the publisher thinks is a hit." After having the major label experiences with RCA and Asylum, Jon says, "I threw my hands up. I was tired of trying to make sense of it. While waiting for these major labels to figure out what they wanted from me, I got tired. I lost track of what it was about and it all made no sense. So, I wanted to walk away. When the Asylum thing came down, I'd already been thinking about making this kind of record with my friend Brent. When the Asylum record went away, I felt like the world had been lifted from my shoulders. My defiance came from the fact I wouldn't change my music. If trying to maintain the integrity of my music means I'm difficult, then I guess I am. Maybe that makes me look like a rebel, but that's also the stuff that's screwed up about this business."

The Sam Bush Band

Almost immediately after he started playing with Emmylou Harris, Jon also started playing in Sam Bush's band. Sam and John Cowan were playing gigs together when Emmylou wasn't busy and Jon filled in the guitar spot with that band. Touring with Sam picked up after the release of his *Glamour and Grits* CD, and it has yet to slow down. Today, Jon is still the lead guitar player for the Sam Bush Band.

Regarding his work with Sam Bush, Jon says, "With Emmylou I worked up solos. I didn't have any knowledge of how to get free and improvise. I'm really not a bluegrasser, but I know enough to jump in there and do it. Emmylou did some bluegrass, and I could dive into that, but most of the time it had to be more commercial stuff. With Sam I have to be able to play everything from 'Blackberry Blossom' to Bob Marley." Through practice, asking questions, watching other players, and trial and error Jon eventually learned how to free up his playing and fit into the improvisational jam setting of the Sam Bush Band. Jon looks back, "The thing with both Sam and Emmy has worked for me because I'm not a hard core Tony Rice, Clarence White, Doc Watson kind of player. I love those guys, but I grew up in Texas also loving Stevie Ray and ZZ Top. I have those influences to draw from as well."

Over the past five years, Jon's relationship with Sam Bush has provided him with some great musical experiences. In

the summer of 2000 Sam, Jon, and Mike Auldridge joined Lyle Lovett's band. They did 60 shows on the road with Lyle and Jon also had the opportunity to record with Lovett.

The Sam Bush Band has also backed up Emmylou Harris on occasion and was Linda Rondstat's band for a show in Tucson last year. Jon was also part of the big JamGrass tour with Sam's band last fall, which included, among others, the David Grisman Quintet and Tony Rice with Peter Rowan. Touring with Tony Rice gave Jon plenty of opportunities to see Tony up close. Jon says, "I first heard Tony when I was in about sixth grade. To this day hearing him play makes me want to give up the guitar and just be a songwriter. When we were on tour, I'd say 'Show me something T!' I'd watch him do what he does and say, 'I'm going to go write a song.' He is amazing."

In addition to playing with Sam Bush, Jon also went on tour in 1999 as a duo with Randy Scruggs. Jon said that he and Randy did about ten to fifteen gigs opening for acts like Trish Yearwood and Faith Hill. An unusual gig for Jon has been the opportunity to play with rapper Kid Rock. Jon said that Kid Rock was scheduled to do a CMT show with Hank Williams, Jr. called *Crossroads*. Kid Rock was going to play a set, then Hank, Jr. was going to play a set, and then the two were scheduled to play together. Jon received a call saying that Kid Rock wanted some bluegrass harmonies on one of the songs that he was going to perform. Jon thought that would be easy enough to handle, so he accepted the gig and started learning the song. A subsequent call asked if he would bring a mandolin. Jon figured he could also handle that and learned how to play the tune on mandolin. When Jon got to the gig he discovered that Kid Rock wanted him to play and sing on the entire set, not just the single tune. Jon had to learn all of the songs right before the show!

That CMT *Crossroads* gig led to Jon also appearing with Kid Rock on the American Music Awards show. Jon said that Kid Rock loves bluegrass and actually has his 8-year-old son taking fiddle lessons. Jon says, "He is one of the nicest people I've worked with and he wants to know all about bluegrass, as strange as that may seem. He is also a big George Jones fan."

Jon's Guitars

Jon learned how to play on his father's 1946 Martin D-28 herringbone. During the years that he played with Carl Shiflett (while still in junior high and high school), Jon owned a 1976 Mossman. When he graduated from high school and left home for Nashville, his father gave him the '46 Martin and that has remained Jon's main instrument to this day. Originally reluctant to put a pickup in his vintage Martin, Jon started playing a 1983 Martin limited edition HD-28 (with Brazilian rosewood back and sides) when he was with Emmylou Harris. He also would occasionally use a Santa Cruz that he had bought from Brad Davis. In 1995 he decided to go ahead and put a pickup in the '46 'bone; this is the guitar he now plays on stage with the Sam Bush band. However, with Sam he always plugs in and additionally runs the guitar through some effects pedals for some tunes. Jon says, "Once you plug in like that, you are making the guitar sound like a Takamine, no matter what you do. I have the only vintage Martin D-28 that sounds like a Takamine when I'm on stage." Jon also plays a Randy Lucas custom LD-28, which Jon says, "Is a great guitar."

On a European tour several years ago Jon lived the nightmare that all guitar players dread. The airlines lost his '46 Martin in Germany for four days. After that experience he decided not to fly with the vintage Martin anymore. After hearing a carbon fiber guitar from CA guitars of Lafayette, Louisiana, and recognizing the indestructibility of that guitar, he has ordered one for himself. "I've liked what I've seen and heard of these guitars, but I'd like to take it out and use it on a live show and see how it feels. I think that the guitar is great for bluegrass because the ones that I have heard are twice as loud as a wood guitar. I think it will make a great travel guitar because I won't have to worry about it," Jon adds.

In addition to traveling with Sam Bush, Jon also does studio work. He sang a duet with Patty Loveless on her *Mountain Soul* CD and also sang with her on her recent Christmas release. Jon says that he has been writing a lot of songs lately and we can only hope that he will be able to put out another solo release of his own material. His CD *Willin'* has spent more time in my CD player the past 6 months than any other disc I own.

What's In a Name?

Jon Randall Stewart grew up in Texas using his nickname, "Randy." Thus, all of his friends from the old days know him as Randy Stewart and still call him Randy. Shortly after he started playing with Emmylou, the group was embarking on a European tour. While passing through airport security Emmylou looked at Jon's passport and saw that his full name was Jon Randall Stewart. During the next show she jokingly introduced him on stage as "Jon Randall Stewart." "After that," Jon said, "the name just stuck and people started calling me Jon Randall for short. When I got the record deal with RCA, they thought my name was Jon Randall. I told them that my last name was really Stewart, but at the time they had two other artists on the label with the last name Stewart and so they asked me if I could use the name Jon Randall on the recording." When asked if he wanted to now go back to being known as Jon Randall Stewart, Jon said, "I'm still wrestling with that."

Whether it is Randy Stewart, Jon Randall, or Jan Randall Stewart, the guitar playing, singing, and songwriting remains the same—superb! On the audio companion to this issue we have included a recording of Jon and Brad Davis jamming on a tune that they call "Froogies." When asked about the title, Jon only said, "It is a very long story." When Jon sat down with Brad in the studio, he said, "I've been messing around with this chord progression." He showed it to Brad and the two were off and running. We have tabbed out Jon's improvised solo to "Froogies" on the next page.

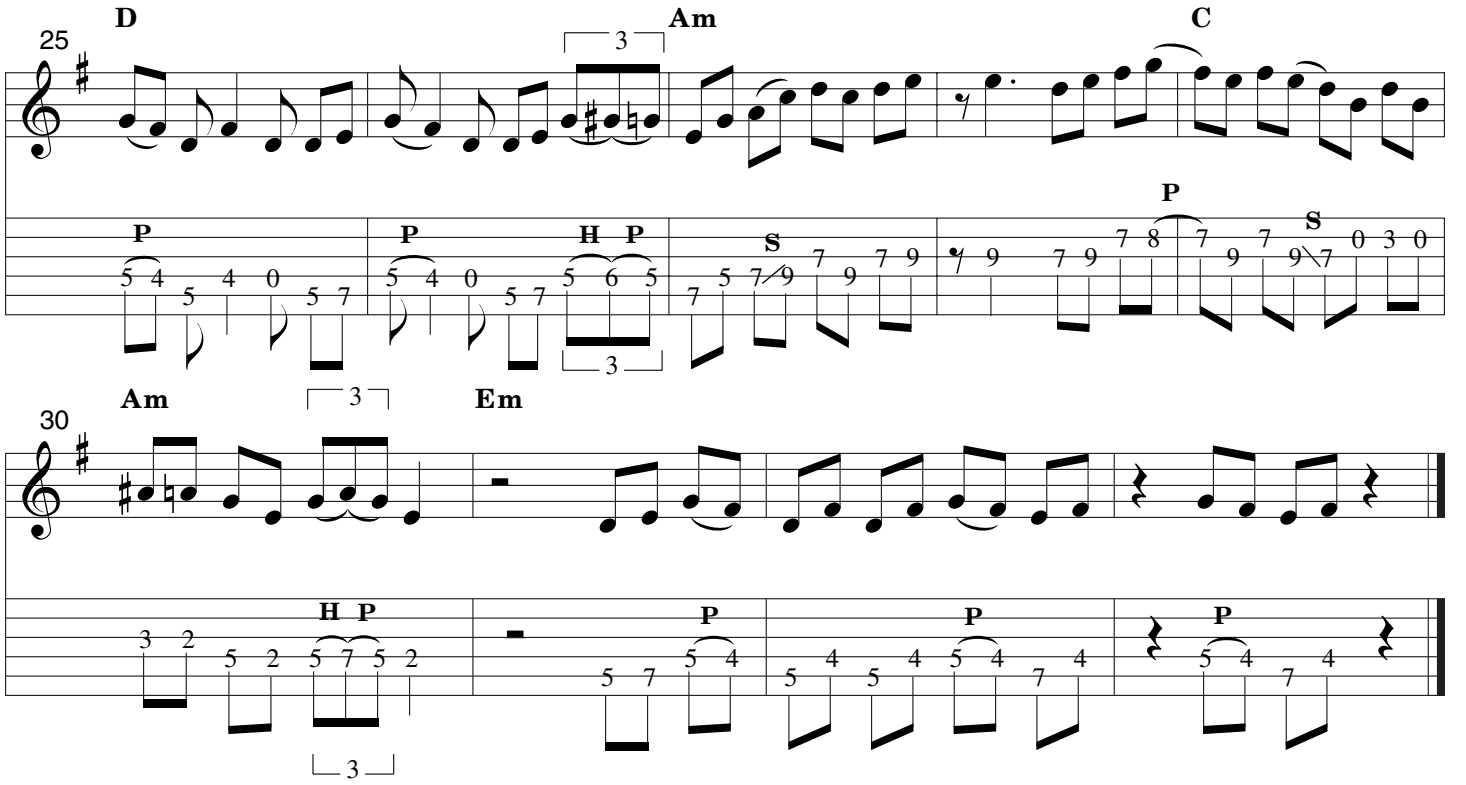
Visit *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* on-line: flatpick.com

Audio CD
Track 3

Froogies

Arranged by Jon Randall
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Froogies (con't)



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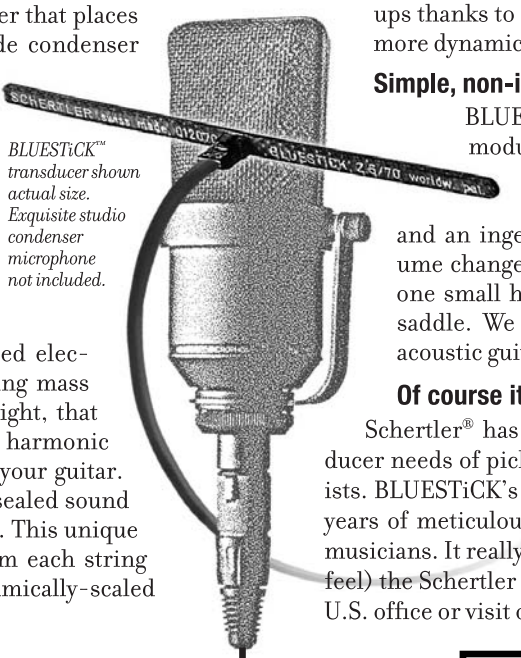

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Crockett's Honeymoon

by Craig Vance

Well, as some of you may have noticed, I was absent from the last issue of the magazine. I was in Ireland again and was so busy that I couldn't get a column cranked out quickly enough before I left. Anyhow, I'm back and I am happy to bring this very lively little Celtic style fiddle tune. The tune is called "Crockett's Honeymoon," and I heard it from a friend who played in my old band, Summit. Years have now passed, and my friend – Robin Bullock – is now doing quite well for himself. I got this version from his CD *Green Fields* (Dorian DIS80112, 1993). Robin mixed it in a medley, so it is only played through twice before going forward to the next tune.

A few years later this tune showed up on Scott Nygaard's CD *Dreamer's Waltz* (Rounder ROUN0397, 1996). However, Scott jumped the tempo up a notch.

The first part of the tune is flowing and melodic and similar to many other fiddle tunes in G. There are some aesthetic motions and pull-offs that set it apart from others. The second – or B – part goes to the C chord. Interestingly enough, the 3rd of the chord is used in the melody line, where you might expect the Em chord. There are several jumps up the neck in this section, and yes, more pull-offs. This tune sits on the line between low and medium on the difficulty scale. Probably the two toughest parts of this one are the extensive use and clean execution of the pull-offs and the unnatural twists and turns of fingering. Other than those, it's a piece of cake (wedding cake, of course)! See you all next time.

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Audio CD
Tracks 5 & 6

Crockett's Honeymoon

Arranged by Craig Vance

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Beginner's Page

by Steve Palazzo

The "Beginner's Page" column for this issue features a guest columnist. Steve Palazzo, a guitar teacher from Santa Cruz, California, has been featured several times in our magazine and appears on our newest flatpicking sampler Flatpicking 2002. *We thank Steve for his article and hope that you will enjoy learning Steve's arrangement of "Weave & Way."*

Here's a great tune taken from Norman Blake's first solo LP *Home In Sulpher Springs* (Rounder-0012), now reissued his compilation CD Slow *Train Through Georgia* (Rounder CD-11526). "Weave & Way" has a pretty melody, unusual chord changes in the "A" part, and is accessible to the beginning flatpicker. I've also heard this tune referred to by old-time players as "Boatin' Up Sandy."

I've played both the second "A" part & the second "B" part with a slightly more complex melody in order to give you more variations for playing "Weave & Way." Here's some tips for getting through this:

Shift up to 3rd position for the first half of measure 3. After playing the first note of measure 5 with your ring finger, roll that ring finger over to the 1st string to catch that G note on the 3rd fret. Both of those notes are chord tones. Let them both ring out and sustain.

At the end of measure 7 slide with your middle finger from the 2nd fret of the G string up the 4th fret. Remember that these are quarter notes, so don't rush the slide!

Use brush strokes over the G chords in the last measure of each "A" part (measures 9 & 17).

At the beginning of the second "B" part try fingering a partial G chord with your middle finger and your ring finger on the B and E strings respectively. Use your pinky to play B note on the 4th fret of the G string while keeping your middle and ring fingers down. That way you can get a nice chordal drone effect while still maintaining the melody.

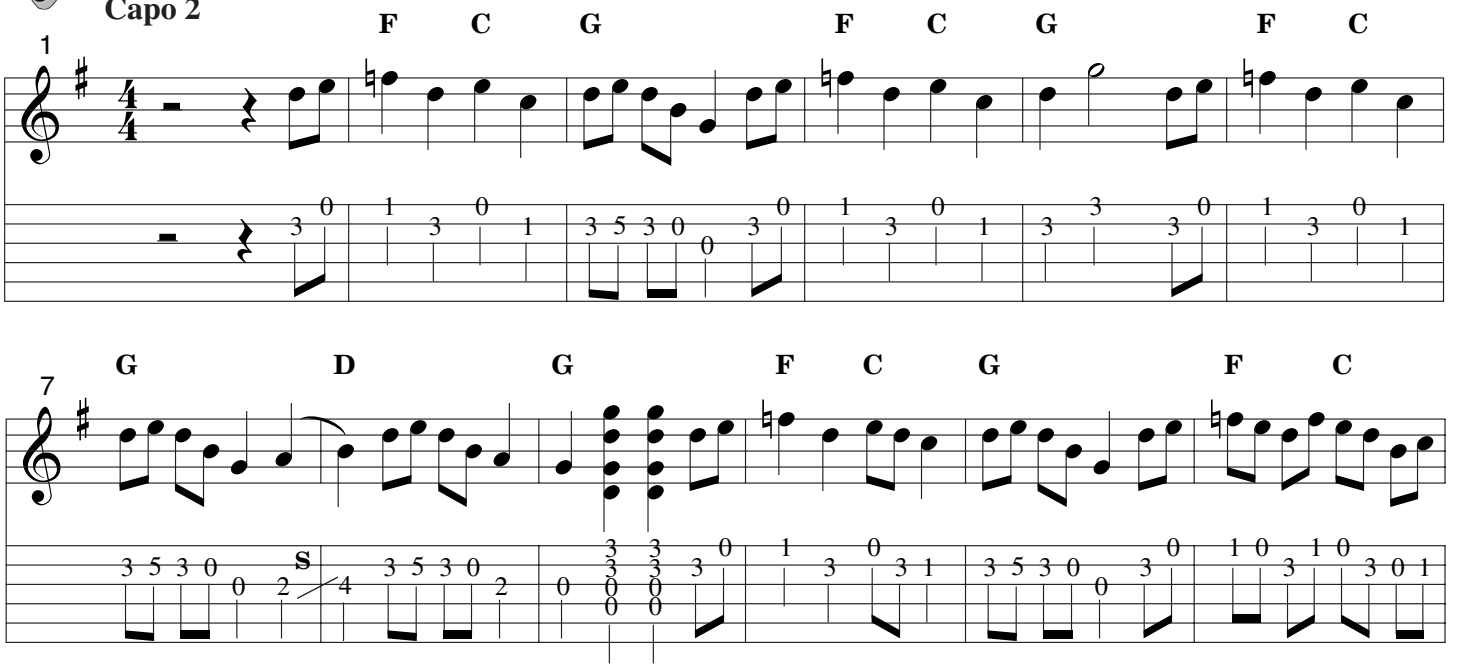
Good luck!

Audio CD Track 7

Weave and Way

Arranged by Steve Palazzo

Capo 2



Weave and Way (con't)

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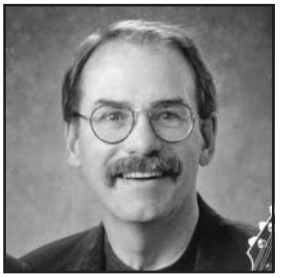

by Joe Carr

Rose of Avonmore

Often, we work so hard getting our lead flatpicking together that we don't have anything to play for regular people. Guitarists will appreciate your killer contest style arrangement of "Wild Fiddler's Rag" with seven variations and using twelve positions, but what about Mom?

Mom (and the rest of the civilian world, for that matter) just wants to hear something pretty. If flatpicking is missing anything, it's pretty tunes. Lots of exciting, thrilling, cool, complex, and driving tunes, but not a lot of pretty. So here is some help.

"Rose of Avonmore" is a beautiful waltz played by Texas fiddlers. One day, I just started playing this tune in pretty much the arrangement given here. I had never played the tune on the guitar before and I had to ask a friend what it was called! I took this as a sign from cosmic forces that we flatpickers better start playing pretty tunes or else!

This arrangement consists largely of chord strums and therefore fits the theme of this column. Notice that I don't play the fifth string in any of the G chords. The fifth string is muted by my left hand's second or third finger, which is fretting the G note at the third fret of the sixth string. The muting is done by letting the finger lay over more than it usually does and actually touch the fifth string.

Also note that the chords played on the first beat of each measure are slightly arpeggiated. Strum slowly though the chord from the lowest note and be sure to play only the indicated strings. Once you have the idea, try playing other simple melodies. Mom will be proud!

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Wildwood Flower (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
Nine Pound Hammer (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
Big Sandy River (Kenny, David, & Wyatt)
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Audio CD
Track 9

Rose of Avonmore

Arranged by Joe Carr

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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Wildwood Flower

Greetings, fellow guitar players, and welcome to another action-packed episode of FGM and the latest column from yours truly. I hope that your 2003 is going in the right direction and that all those New Year's resolutions you made to become better guitar players are already paying off. To help you in that noble endeavor I present the following.

Let's reach back into the archives and take a look at a time-honored old chestnut from the instrumental guitar vernacular. When I was but a wee lad, my dad asked me to learn this tune on his gut string Mexican special. I think he wanted to ascertain whether I was worth spending the dough for a steel string (I got one). "Wildwood Flower" has a great, if simple, melody and is chock full of hammer-on and pull-off opportunities.

Before you start learning this, play through a few C major scales, using the proper fingering. It'll help familiarize your fingers with the movements you'll be using on this tune.

We begin with a down stroke on a C chord, followed by a down stroke on a C sus4 chord, followed by an open G and B string together. Then hammer-up to the 3rd string 2nd fret (A), then the 2nd string 1st fret (C), then strum a full C chord. This whole sequence happens with your left hand holding a C chord position. That is, 3rd finger on the 3rd fret on the 5th string, 2nd finger on the 2nd fret of the 4th string, etc. The idea is to create an open, ringing resonance, like a piano with the sustain pedal held down.

In the B part, again played out of the C position, down stroke on the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings, in that order, as you work the melody up the B string to the open E and back down. Make sure and try to get a clean hammer up to the F chord.

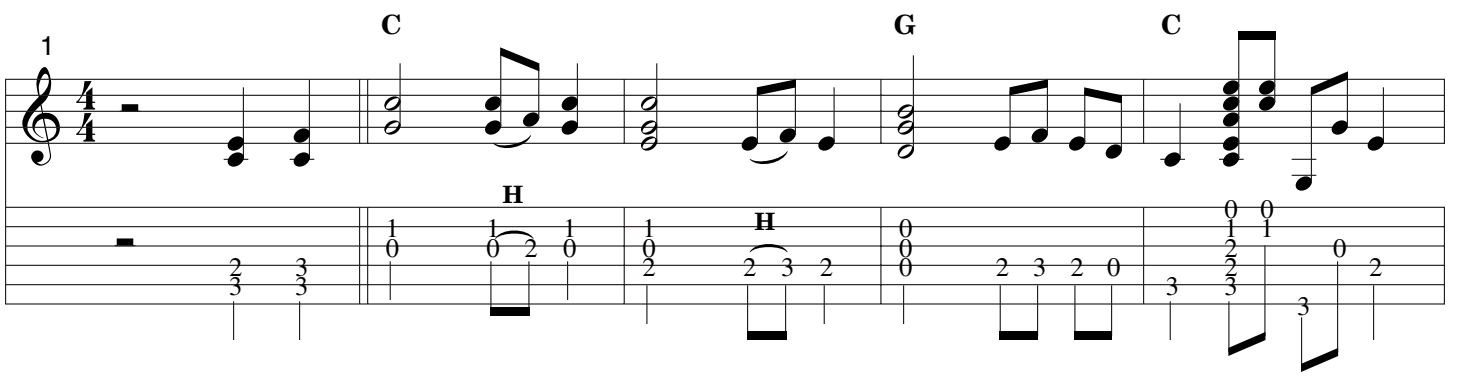
I've also tabbed out the melody an octave higher. Try to find someone to play the rhythm backup for you and work out the one-octave-higher version.

I hope you enjoy this great old tune. Share it with a friend! 'Til next time, happy pickin'!

Audio CD
Tracks 10 & 11

Wildwood Flower

Arranged by John Tindel



Wildwood Flower (con't)

Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

Doing it the hard way
Pickup Jack Removal

You'd be hard pressed to find a cleaner or more original 1960s Brazilian rosewood D-28 than this one:

That is, except for the end pin jack, which had been installed by drilling the end pin hole to the conventional half-inch diameter.

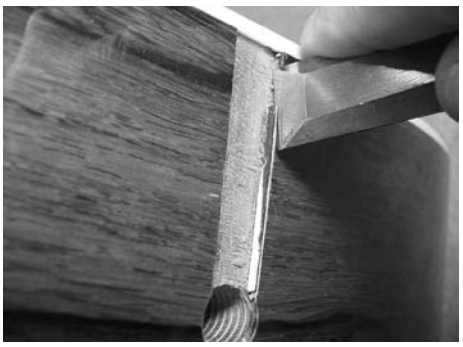
Now the guitar has a new owner, who brought it to me to see what could be done to restore the original appearance after removing the pickup and jack. Most of the time, I'll simply replace the end pin with an after-market one that fits into the enlarged hole. Sometimes, I'll fill the hole with new wood, redrill, and fit an original style end pin. Either of those methods leave clear evidence of work—either a large end pin, or a ring of non matching material around the end pin.

They say taxicab drivers live for the day when a guy in a tuxedo will jump into the back seat and shout, "Follow that car." I suppose we luthiers get a similar rush when we hear, "I don't care what it costs, just do the best job you can." At any rate, that's a request I don't get all that often.

My first step was to remove the existing end wedge decoration that had been cut when the hole was enlarged. I have this funny little saw I made from a .006" thick jeweler's slitting saw. It's basically a tiny version of the curved saw used to cut holes in hardwood flooring and other flat surfaces. I used it to slice through the black purfling line so I could lift the inlay out without excess damage to the surrounding wood and/or finish.

I was able to pry out the pieces because the plastic inlay was quite strong and flexible, and not all that firmly glued to the wood underneath:

Some residual bits of the inlay stuck to the edges of the slot, so I used a wide chisel to cut them free:



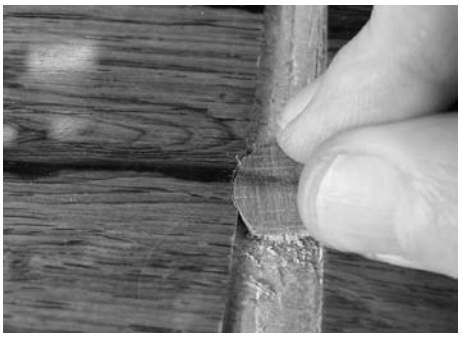
All in all, the inlay came out very neatly, with only the most minor chipping of the finish:

In order to restore the drilled end block, I made a wooden plug that fit all the way through the hole, and seated it in place with some hot hide glue:

I chose hide glue because it dries very hard and makes a rigid joint, and it is easily cleaned up with warm water, so I wouldn't have to worry about any finish damage in the area.

Using one of my smallest flat chisels, I carefully leveled the plug to the same depth as the bottom of the inlay channel:

Next, after a lengthy search through my wood scraps, I made a circular plug to match the grain of the rosewood at the hole:



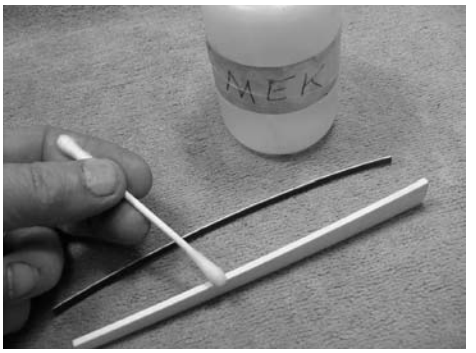
It took a while, but I was able to find a piece of Brazilian rosewood with that same black streak. I set it in place with some hide glue and let it dry overnight.

The next day I was able to cut the plug away where the new inlay piece would fit, leaving two tiny crescent-shaped pieces filling the edges of the channel:

After trimming these little pieces, I leveled them just a bit below the surrounding surface and coated them with new lacquer in preparation for the work to follow.

I shaped a piece of matching plastic binding material to fit the inlay channel, planing the piece to the same dimension and taper as the original, allowing for the black and white purfling on either side:

Methyl ethyl ketone is my favorite "welding" agent for celluloid and plastic because it softens the surface and doesn't evaporate as quickly as acetone. I coated the pieces evenly, using a regular cotton swab:



And, holding them together for a few seconds, I was able to make up the composite plastic end decoration:

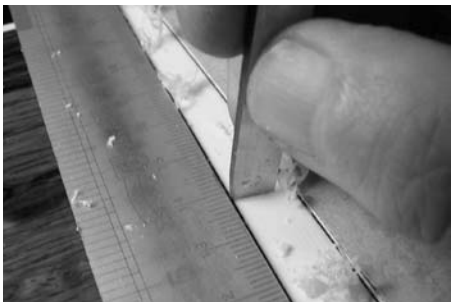
After trial fitting, cutting, trial fitting, and cutting again, I got a neat fit:

Here I used some plastic cement, being very careful not to have very much "bleed" out of the joint onto the surrounding finish:

Because the piece fit so neatly, the only clamping pressure I needed was a firm press with my smooth faced hammer. I slid the hammer along, pressing the inlay until it seated neatly. After each pass of the hammer, I gave the surface a quick wipe with a cloth to make sure no plastic cement settled into the finish:

The inlay sat just a bit "proud" of the surface, so I scraped it level with the nearby finished wood and binding.

The inlay was new plastic and had no finish on it, while the rest of the guitar had aged amber lacquer all over it, including all the binding. I wanted to add amber lacquer on my new work to make it match the old, so I carefully scraped the new plastic lower than the surrounding finish:



My attempt was to make the new area just the same level as the wood underneath the lacquer. Martin finishes are about .006" thick, so that was the amount I was trying to take off the new material.

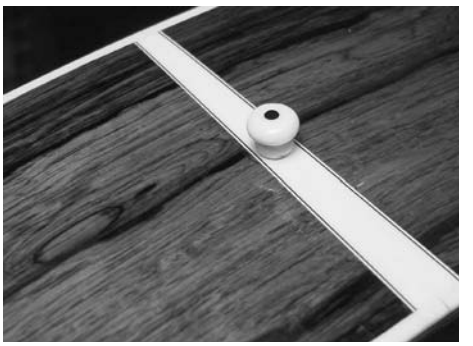
Some years ago I discovered the ideal source for perfectly tinted lacquer that would match aged finishes. I keep a jar of clear lacquer on my garage roof and let it age in the sun until it turns a nice dark amber. Not only is it the same material I ordinarily use, it is aged by just the same process—U. V. light—so the color is just right.

After masking off the original finish, I airbrushed my amber lacquer on the new work:

My new finish touchup was fully as thick as the original finish on a new instrument, so it took just as long to dry as a full finished guitar. I let it dry for a good two weeks before leveling and polishing.

After drilling and reaming the hole, the job was done and the standard end pin would fit properly:

If you look closely, you can see the two little crescent pieces outboard of the end pin. Those tiny pieces almost look like curved scratches because the grain matches so closely. All in all, I think this guitar is just about "back to original."



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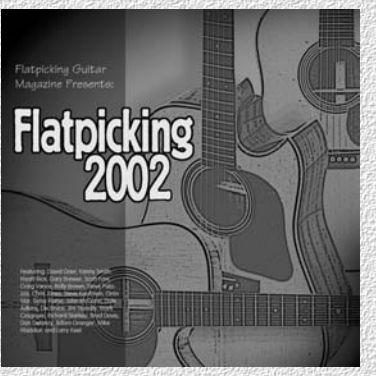

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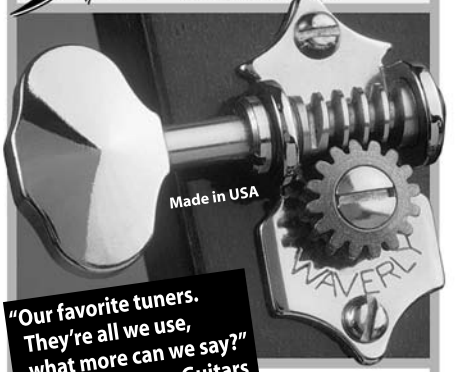

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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Changing Positions: Katy Hill

Hi friends and Happy New Year! I hope to see calluses tough as hippo hide on your fingers after the holidays. I've got a good exercise picked out for you this time. I have written this tune out many times but I don't think I have written it with so many position changes. These changes are in the arrangement to get you used to jumping up and down the neck using open strings. In this case we are always using the 1st string. You can set the arrangement to use any of the top three strings for the jump but this is the way I am most comfortable. I'll use the 1st string 60% of the time.

Be sure to play this arrangement slow and steady. You can only play as fast as the intervals allow. If you can play the shift changes steadily, you are playing at the correct speed. There is no top speed and there is no bottom or slow speed. Play it as an exercise and a drill until it is smooth and around 220 BPM. Then kick into high gear.

Have fun and let me know how this one treats you.

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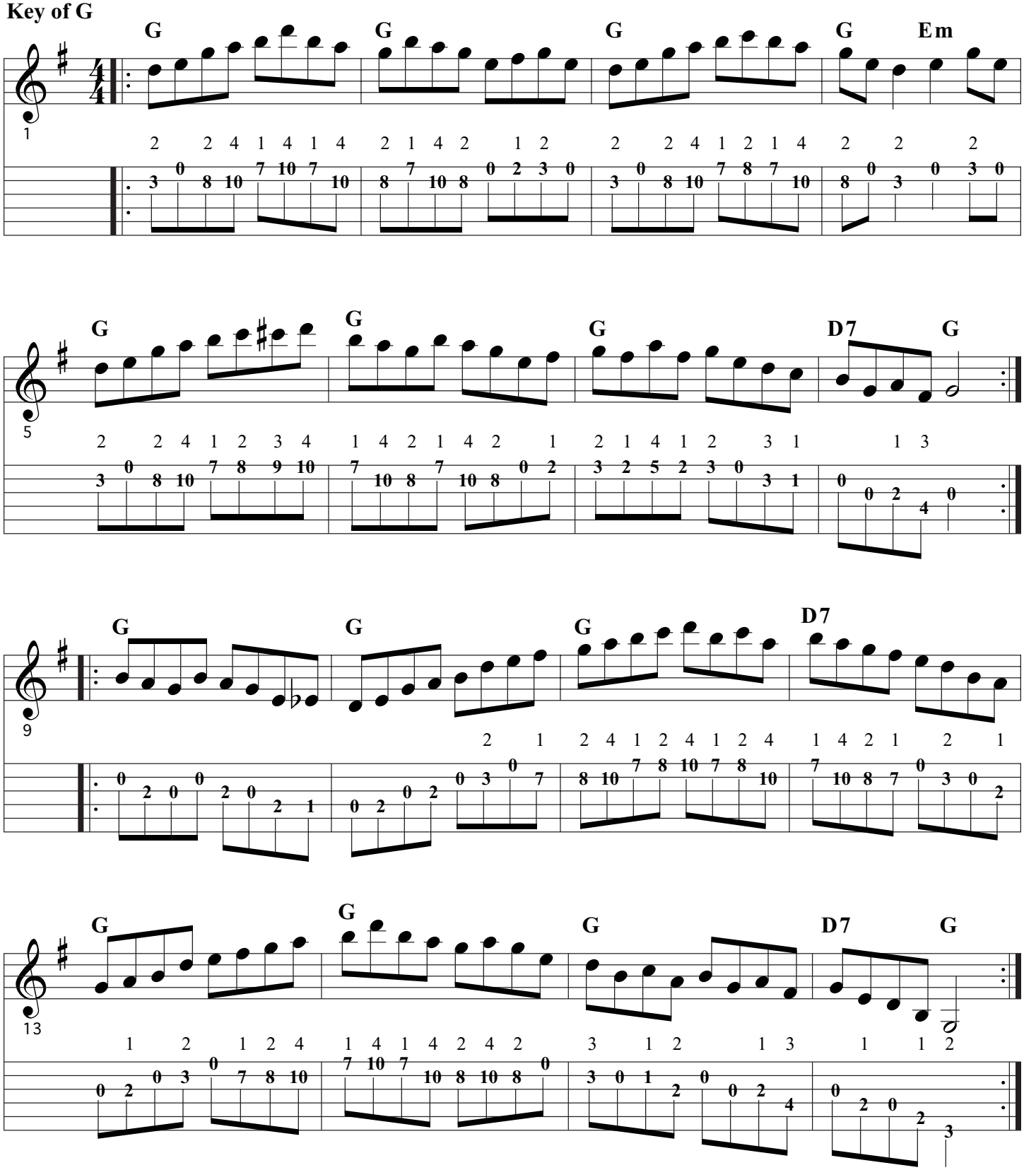
Katy Hill

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

Key of G



Adventures in Acoustic Music: Style Study

by John Carlini

Part 2: Swing Style

Welcome to Part 2 of our adventures in style. This time we'll be looking at "swing" music. In my experience of teaching at guitar seminars and camps such as the Steve Kaufman Flatpicking Kamp, I know that a lot of you are interested in playing swing music on the guitar. This is as good a place as any to start.

The essence of swing cannot be notated any more than the feeling of bluegrass can be written. It exists in the spirit of the music. But notation is the closest thing we have to transform the notes into a language. Duke (Ellington) said it best: "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing!"

In our study, the chord progression is the same as the bluegrass style study from Part 1. But in swing music the harmony expands in order to include 6ths, 9ths, minor 7ths, etc. The rhythm part of this study can be played using only the four chord forms illustrated. These are good "voicings" to learn on the fingerboard and will form a basis for further development. Here are a few tips. When moving from the G6 to the G7 chord, keep your 3rd and 4th fingers on the frets. Move only your 1st and 2nd fingers. Think of these pairs of fingers as teams working together. Similarly, when moving from G6 to G/B, keep your 1st and 2nd "team" on the 4th and 6th strings, slide up (stretch!), and switch the 2nd and 3rd strings with your 3rd and 4th "team."

These are both valuable moves to get together. By the way, a chord symbol with a slash in it (such as G/B) means that name of the chord is on the left side of the slash and a specific bass note for that chord is on the right side. So "G/B" means a G major chord with B (the 3rd) in the bass (Or "G over B"). Of course, the A7 chord will be 2 frets above the G7, and the D9 will be 2 frets above the C9.

The suggested tab for the lead part hovers around positions VII and V. I say "suggested" because there are always multiple ways to play an idea. You may find a fingering that works better for you on some things. But I believe that the suggested tab will give you "pictures" of the chords as they go by. However, don't hesitate to experiment!

On the audio CD with this issue there is a slow version followed by an up tempo version. Again, I suggest that you tape the chords and practice the lead with your tape. Put five or six choruses on the tape and definitely use your metronome!

I appreciate your ongoing emails and comments. Next time we'll explore this progression using another style. Meanwhile, have fun!

For performance and teaching information, please visit John's web site, www.johncarlini.com or e-mail him at jlc@johncarlini.com. Order his teaching videos by visiting www.musicians-workshop.com.

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Arranged by John Carlini

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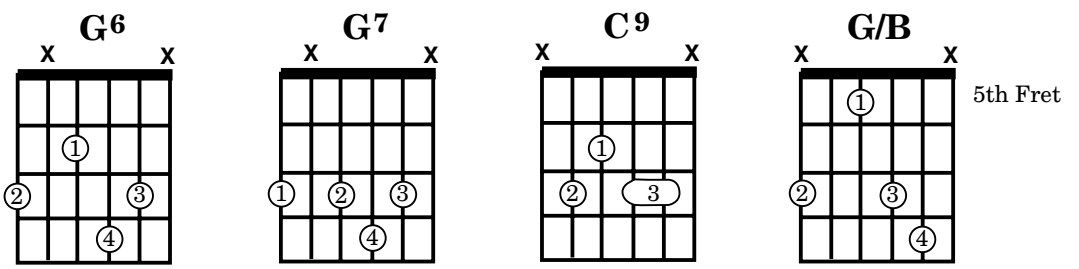


Flatpick Profile:
Bob Minner

by Dan Miller

Ten years ago, when Bob Minner got a job playing acoustic guitar, fiddle, banjo, and Dobro for country star Tim McGraw's band, he says, "I was the only bluegrass guy in the group and the bluegrass guys are always the brunt of the jokes in country bands." Bob explains that everyone else in the band had a country, blues, rock, or an R&B background and they were not really familiar with bluegrass. To stop the band from "ragging" him for being a bluegrass guy, Bob brought out a copy of Tony Rice's *Manzatina* CD and told the band, "I have something I want you to listen to." Bob recalls, "After listening to *Manzanita* they said, 'Man, that is really good!' I explained, 'Here is the thing—this is all going down live. They were playing as a band!' In country everything is tracked but then it is all fixed and becomes fairly sterile. 'This was recorded without bells and whistles. It is organic. It is a natural interaction,' I told them. After that they took me, and bluegrass, more seriously."

Bob's first instrument was the clawhammer banjo. He explains, "Dad had a thing for old-time clawhammer banjo and wanted to learn it. There was a guy in St. Louis, Jim Olin, who was a field recorder for the Smithsonian. He would travel around the area and record traditional American music. Jim had an old banjo and knew how to play the clawhammer style. My dad hooked up with him and took lessons."

Bob was about five years old when his father began learning how to play the banjo. "To a young kid," Bob said, "a banjo is very intriguing. It is shiny and it is loud. I'd hold the banjo and try to play it when my dad was at work. He eventually started teaching me how to play."

When Bob was about eight or nine he "started messing around on the guitar." He recalls, "The first guitar music that I remember hearing was on an instrumental record by Harlow Wilcox and the Groovy Grubworms! My grandma was a huge Johnny Cash fan and when I started messing around with the guitar she insisted that I learn the 'Folsom Prison Blues' lick. So the first things I learned on the guitar were the Harlow Wilcox songs and some Johnny Cash licks."

Just before Bob began learning how to play the guitar he had a profound musical experience. "When I was about seven my dad took me to the Washington University concert hall in St. Louis. We sat up close to the front of the stage. When it came time for the show to begin I watched as one guy led another guy out on to the stage. I asked my dad, 'Why is he doing that?' My dad told me that it was because the one guy was blind. Of course, it was Doc and Merle Watson. I remember listening to the music and being completely amazed by the concept that this guy was blind and playing the guitar. That was my first introduction to Doc."

When Bob first began learning how to play the guitar he already had some competence on the banjo. He said, "I realized that three of the strings were the same and that made getting around on the guitar a little easier. When I started learning how to play the guitar I was just playing melodies as opposed to learning chords and rhythm. My experience with the banjo made picking out melodies on the guitar easier."

When he was about eleven years old Bob got his first Doc Watson records and then a short time later discovered Norman Blake. He says, "I would listen to Doc and Norman records over and over and try to figure out what they were doing. Sometimes I would put on a whole stack of records and just lie on the floor and listen. I especially loved doing that with the *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* albums. They had music and conversation and I would listen to everything. There were two people I gravitated towards from listening those records—Doc Watson and Vassar Clements."

When Bob was about fourteen he heard his first Dan Crary recording, *Lady's Fancy*. Shortly thereafter he heard Tony Rice. He says, "When I heard Tony Rice, that changed everything. His playing was more aggressive, more authoritative. I listened to him with Grisman and I remember thinking, "This is real different.' It made me apply myself to listening to different types of music and working to translate that back to bluegrass guitar. I was listening to Tony and Dan Crary a lot. Their playing seemed more intricate than what I had heard Doc and Norman play."

About the same time that Bob discovered Tony and Dan he was also entering—and winning—local guitar and banjo contests. A player on the local music scene who

influenced Bob was Bull Harman. Bob said, "Bull was one of the few guys in the local area playing in a bluegrass band which featured guitar as a lead instrument. He built his reputation on that. He was a big influence on me."

Bob's professional music career had begun by the time he was ten years old. Shortly after he had started learning how to play the banjo, his father took him to meetings of the Old Time Fiddler's Association in Kirkwood, Missouri, and he began to gain experience playing with other people. When he was about ten, his banjo playing was featured on a radio program that was broadcast from a carpet store opening. A local musician, Fiddlin' Willie Key, heard the program and called Bob's parents and asked if Bob could join his bluegrass gospel group. Bob recalls, "Willie was a plumber by trade, but he had converted a school bus into a tour bus and would take his band to play at local festivals and conventions. One of my earliest memories was sitting in the step well of that bus and watching the road go by. I guess that is where I got traveling on the road in my blood." Bob played with Willie Key's band for nearly four years.

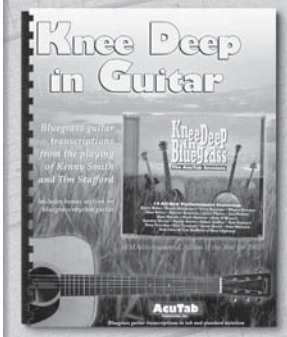
When Bob was about fifteen he met Mel Besher, another young bluegrass music fan and guitar player. Bob remembers, "We immediately became inseparable. We would spend weeks at each other's houses playing music together. His dad was a big Stanley Brothers fan and they introduced me to the Stanleys' music. Mel had this vision to not play the same stuff that everyone else was playing in bluegrass bands. He wanted to do something a little more progressive and I was right with him. We formed a band and started taking songs from other genres and bringing them into bluegrass. I had wanted to try and play different things on the guitar and Mel gave me an outlet to do that. He also began exposing me to the music of bands like Rush and Queen and a lot of other things that were popular on the radio. Mel's dad was friends with Jimmy Martin and we got the opportunity to hang out with Jimmy at his house when I was around sixteen and seventeen years old. I learned a lot about rhythm guitar from him."

Throughout his high school years Bob's complete focus was on playing the guitar. He said, "It was great because I would go to a festival with the band on a weekend, or enter a guitar contest if the band wasn't playing, and I'd come back to school on Monday with money in my pocket."

Bob remembers one of the true highlights of his high school years was having an opportunity to pick with Charles Sawtelle. He recalls, "I went to a festival in Independence, Missouri, and Hot Rize was playing. I met Charles and asked him if he would pick with me. I was a big fan of Charles' playing. He was so unconventional. Charles agreed to play a tune with me at the festival and we ended up picking for about two hours. It was a really cool experience for me to have someone of that stature just sit down and pick with me."

Although Bob had participated in a lot of guitar and banjo contests in Missouri, he didn't make his first trip to Winfield until 1985, when he was nineteen. He recalls, "There was a local guitar builder named Paul E. Smith who had built me my first real good bluegrass guitar. He asked me if I wanted to go Winfield with him and compete in the contest. The first year that I went it was a bit overwhelming. It was the first really big festival that I had ever attended. There were so many great players there! I had pre-registered for the contest, but I wasn't really prepared. I found a backup player when I got there and went up on stage without a clear idea of what

Knee Deep In Guitar!



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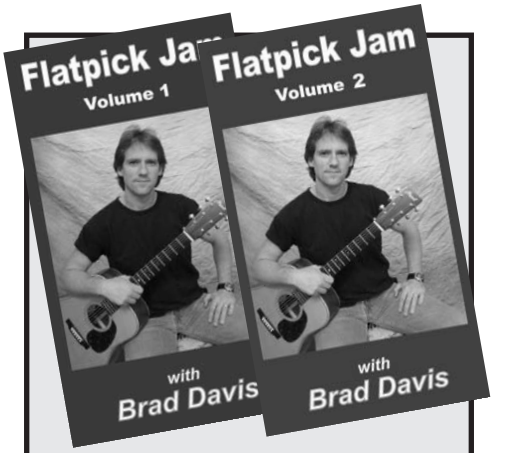

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Bob Minner on stage at a Tim McGraw band sound check

I was going to play. I just winged it and got devoured."

Bob left Winfield that first year having learned some valuable lessons. He said, "I learned that I needed to have exact arrangements worked up and that I needed to bring a rhythm guitar player who was familiar with the material. I didn't know how to arrange very well, so I also worked on that." Bob went back to Winfield the next two years (1986 and 1987) and placed third both years.

After he graduated from high school Bob continued playing bluegrass, but also started playing the electric guitar in country bands. He says, "I began studying guys like Albert Lee, James Burton, Jerry Donahue, and Jimmy Bryant and inevitably started using my fingers along with the flatpick. I started grabbing clusters of notes to get more out of the guitar. After learning how to do it on the electric guitar, I also started doing it on the acoustic. I felt strange about it at first. I didn't want to rock the boat too much because in the local area bluegrass scene you wouldn't get hired if you got too far out there. But I saw Pat Flynn doing the same thing and that made me feel more comfortable about it."

After graduation, Bob continued to play with Mount Freedom Grass, the bluegrass band he had played with all during high school. However, if the bluegrass band didn't have a gig, Bob would call the country band and go out and play a local VFW or Coon Hunters Club venue. Through country music Bob met his wife, Ginger, who was a country singer, and the two joined a Kansas City area country band and toured with them for a couple of years. However, when their first child was born in 1989 they settled in at home. Bob continued playing music on weekends, but also got a day job re-treading tires.

Like most country music musicians, both Bob and his wife had dreams of moving to Nashville. Randy Davis (a friend who had been the drummer in the country band with which Bob and Ginger had toured) had already made the move to Nashville and encouraged them to visit. He told them, "Come on down and stay with me and my roommate. There is no need for you to pay money for a hotel." Bob and Ginger took Randy up on the offer and went to Nashville and spent a few days with Randy and his roommate. The roommate happened to be a guy named Tim McGraw.

Bob remembers, "That was before Tim had anything going. He was singing at Skull Rainbow Room. After club hopping we went back to the apartment and played music. I remember my wife saying about Tim, 'If he ever gets a chance he will be a superstar because he has charisma.'" Bob and Ginger went back to Missouri after their trip to Nashville, but they kept in contact with Randy and Tim. When Tim formed a band to go out and do club gigs, he asked Bob to join him but Bob turned it down due to his responsibilities at home.

About six months after turning down the job with Tim's new band, Bob was at home watching TV and Tim's first music video came on the tube. Bob said, "I called Tim right away and said, 'If you ever need an acoustic player I'd love to have the job.' Tim answered, 'I need someone who can play both acoustic guitar and fiddle.'" Bob, who had learned how to play the fiddle after meeting his wife and becoming fascinated with her uncle's fiddle playing, told Tim "I can do that!" Tim told Bob, "If you can move down here to Nashville, you've got the job. You'll have to audition for management, but I'm the boss. You have the job."

After moving to Nashville in 1992 to play in Tim's band, Bob also began hanging out at the Station Inn and meeting some of the best bluegrass players in the industry. "There is a raised level of musicality here in Nashville," he notes. "The nature of being a professional musician in this town is that you have to get better or go home." Bob says that he has enjoyed the challenge.

Although Bob won an early Taylor prototype Dan Crary model guitar and a Martin J-40 at Winfield, he continued to use his Paul E. Smith guitar as his main instrument through the early years with the McGraw band. However, he said that the guitar did not travel well. He needed a more solid guitar and one that he could use with electronics. For a while he tried various guitars from Takamine, Gibson, and Tacoma. It wasn't until he got a composite graphite guitar from CA Guitars of Lafayette, Louisiana, that he found exactly what he was looking for. Bob said, "The guitar sounds great and it makes more sense for a guy who tours like I do."

Bob first encountered the CA guitars at Tim McGraw's annual Swampstock event. "CA was giving away a guitar at the show. They left it sitting out so that people could look at it. The event was held in late October and it started getting really cold at night. I had picked up the guitar and played it several times during the day and I really liked the sound of it. As it started getting colder I was thinking, 'Someone better put that guitar away.' I said something about it to Barry Salinger, CA's CEO, and he said, 'That guitar can freeze or it can get boiling hot. Temperature won't have an effect on it." The guitar sounded so big and so good, I thought, 'This is the way to go.'"

Bob continues, "With all of the traveling I do with the band, I need a guitar that is

consistent in all temperatures and climates. Plus, when we are on the road, my guitars are in the hands of somebody else except when I am with them on stage. The guitars are always being moved around and taken in and out of guitar racks. There is always the chance that the guitar might get dropped, scratched, or dinged. Since I started playing the CA guitars I don't have to worry about any of that. With the CA guitars I've never had any problems with the neck, the glue joints, the bridge coming up, or any other problems relating to humidity, temperature, or environment."

When asked about the CA guitars for bluegrass, Bob said, "Dragging vintage Martin guitars, and other wonderful wooden guitars, out into the middle of a field for 2 or 3 days is neglect. Why would you expose a guitar that you've spent several thousand dollars on to that environment? You could lay a CA guitar out in a field all weekend and it is not going to affect it. The only thing that the bluegrass players are not going to like about these guitars is their look. But with the wood shortage and the rising cost of custom acoustic guitars the CA guitars make sense. They are moderately priced, they sound great, and they are indestructible."

When asked about the sound of the CA guitars Bob said, "We recorded McGraw's new album at Alliare Studios up in the Catskills. The producer asked me to bring all of my guitars, plus the studio had an incredible selection of fine acoustic guitars: there were old Gibsons, old Martins, plus guitars by Santa Cruz, Breedlove, and others. This was a very big budget recording with the best mics, best pre-amps, everything. Byron Gallimore was the producer. He has been producer of the year three or four times and he knows great sounding guitars. When we did our first sound check for the record, I picked up my CA and both Byron and the engineer, Julian King, were blown away. Byron and Julian both hear great guitars everyday. These guys are the best in the business and they are going to tell you what they like and don't like. For every tune we cut on the record we would end up going through a series of guitars and choosing the one that was best for each tune. The CA was chosen for every song except for three. On two we used a 1950s J-45 because Byron is a big Gibson fan, and on one tune I played a 1936 D-18 because they wanted a dry sound for that song. So the CA guitar held its own in a major application. It was chosen for almost every song. There is something about the presence of these guitars for recording that wood guitars don't have."

Although Bob produced and played electric, acoustic, resophonic guitars and mandolin on a gospel project that his wife Ginger released in 2002, he has yet to put out a CD of his own. When asked about his plans in that regard, Bob said that he is getting ready to begin work on an instrumental guitar project. He says, "It will be an acoustic praise and worship record. It will feature new arrangements of some gospel standards, plus some original tunes. It is going to be something that is easy to listen to, not something that is so busy. I want it to be something that people will put on during quiet time when they are reading or otherwise trying to relax. I want it to compliment what is going on around them. It is not going to be an intense flatpicking project." Bob said that the CD will feature guitar duos and trios and he is going to ask some of his friends, like Ron Block, James Burton, and Brent Rowan, to help him out.

In addition to playing music in Tim McGraw's band, Bob wanted to mention that, "Ginger and I do evangelism and original Christian music she and I write. And we are available for church and Christian-based functions. My e-mail address is redwordz@hotmail.com and my mailing address is: Living Stones Ministries c/o Bob Minner, Jr. 201 Nokes Dr., Hendersonville, TN 37075 if anyone wants to contact us for more info. We are working on a website as we speak but it is not up and running yet." CA guitars and I are also working on some CA clinic dates as well."

On the audio CD companion for this issue we feature Bob playing his arrangement of "Power in the Blood." Brad Davis plays rhythm guitar on that cut and the tab for Bob's first solo appears on the next page.

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In this 90-minute video, rhythm guitar master Wyatt Rice teaches you how to greatly expand your rhythm guitar abilities by teaching: crosspicking rhythm; syncopated rhythm; a variety of right hand patterns combined with left hand technique to develop a "groove" rhythm; unique bass runs; passing chords; chord substitutions; and chord inversions.

Additionally, Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. Also featured are guest appearances by: Rickie Simpkins on fiddle (Sally Goodin' and Dusty Miller) and mandolin (Big Country and I Wonder Where You Are Tonight), Sammy Shelor on banjo (Ground Speed and Whitewater), Kenny Smith on guitar (Goodbye, Liza Jane and Bill Cheathum) and Tony Rice (Waltz for Indira, Manzanita, and Devlin). Wyatt provides guitar accompaniment to each of these artists and then analyzes the techniques he has employed.

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Power In The Blood

Arranged by Bob Minner
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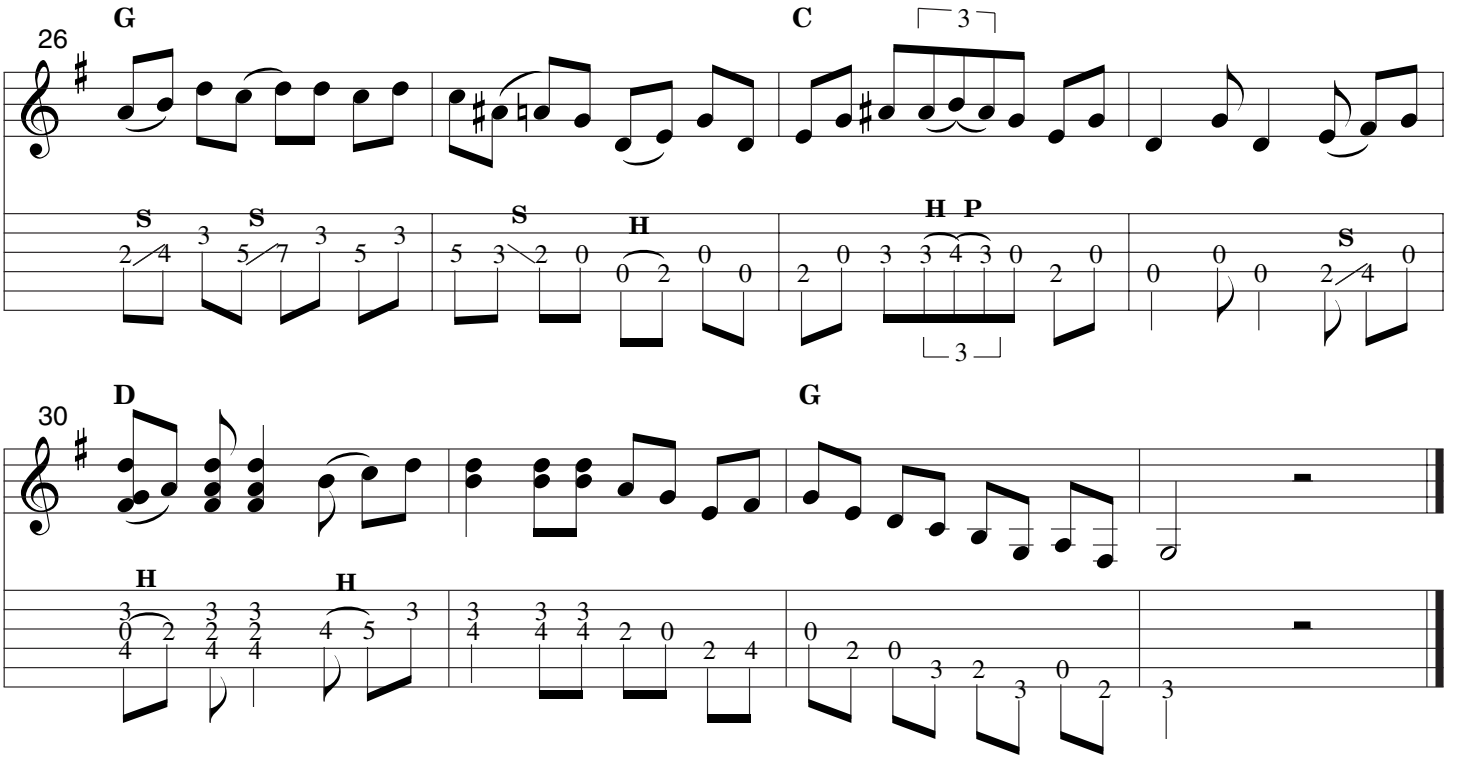
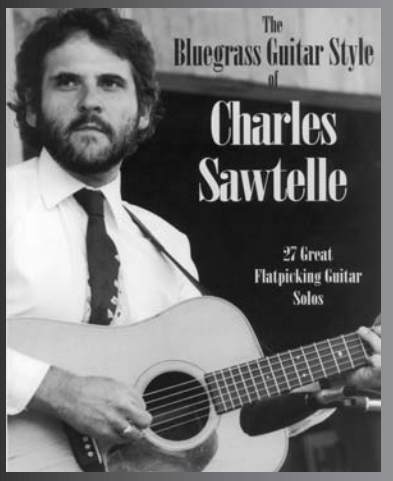
Power In The Blood (con't)





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Composite Acousitc Guitars

by Dan Miller

Ellis Seal (left) and Barry Salinger (right) present a CA Guitar to Pete Blecha (center) of the Experience Music Project Sound Lab in Seattle, Washington

Enthusiasts of the acoustic guitar have great passion for finely crafted instruments made from the best tone woods—so much so that many players own several, if not dozens, of these beautifully sounding "boxes." Unfortunately, along with their great beauty and magnificent tone, these guitars come with inherent problems which all acoustic guitar enthusiasts must confront.

These days the first problem encountered when selecting a new acoustic guitar is the high price of guitars made from fine tone woods. As these woods become scarcer, guitars made with these woods will continue to go up in price. The second set of problems comes from the effects that environment has on wood. Environmental factors like temperature and humidity not only wreak havoc on tuning, but also contribute to glue joints loosening, wood cracking, and guitars physically coming apart at the seams. Next, the mechanical tension of steel strings can cause bridges to pull up, require necks to be reset, and cause tops to "belly up." Finally, there is the normal wear and tear. Wood guitars can easily get scratched, dinged, cracked, and dented. If the owner travels to a lot of outdoor events, travels on airlines, or plays a lot of gigs, all of the problems mentioned above are compounded.

If you have owned an acoustic guitar for any length of time, you have probably encountered many or perhaps all of the tuning, maintenance, and repair problems that all acoustic guitar players have dealt with since the first set of steel strings was strung across a Dreadnought guitar back in about 1934. If you're tired of dealing with these problems, if you're hesitant to take your prize $5000 guitar out of the closet, or if you don't want to travel with your best guitars because you don't want to worry about airlines and dents and humidity and temperature, then you might want to take a look at the guitars being made by the Composite Acoustic Company (CA Guitars) of Lafayette, Louisiana. Using carbon fiber materials, they are making an acoustic guitar that is virtually indestructible, is unaffected by temperature or humidity, and sounds just like a finely crafted wood guitar.

A carbon fiber guitar that sounds like a great wood guitar!? That was the first question I asked when Tim Stafford came into the Clear Blue Productions studio in Pulaski, Virginia, about a year and a half ago to record a tune for his upcoming solo album (soon to be released by Doobie Shea Records). He pulled his CA guitar out of its case and announced that this would be the guitar he was going to record with. I thought, "Really?" He sat down and started to pick the guitar and I could not believe how great it sounded. Of course, Tim's masterful playing had something to do with that, but I tried out the guitar myself and it even sounded good when I played it!

I travel quite a bit and most of the traveling I do involves attending outdoor bluegrass festivals in less-than-optimal climatic conditions for guitars. I am always concerned about my fine wood guitars at these events, so when I saw the practicality and great sound, of Tim Stafford's CA guitar I immediately emailed the company to see if I could get one. Since mine arrived I have taken it to many events and shown it to dozens of pickers. Their first response to the guitar is usually the same as mine: "This is amazing!" Coincidentally, my CA arrived at my office in the middle of winter. The guitar had already spent several days on UPS trucks in freezing temperatures. When I unpacked the guitar and opened the case, the guitar was still in tune!

Not everyone who has played my CA guitar thinks it sounds as good as their wood guitars, but they have all been impressed with how good these guitars sound. And when challenged with a "blind" sound test, they always have a tough time picking out which guitars are wood and which is the CA. Ellis Seal, the brains behind the CA design, says, "We don't expect to replace vintage wood guitars. Everyone who works here at CA owns fine wood guitars and loves them. But we saw a need for a wood alternative that sounded great and wouldn't have to be treated with kid gloves. We developed something that has the tone of wood, but is a lot more durable." Many professional players not only purchase these guitars to use on the road, but also find that

they prefer them in the studio, and a number of session players in both Nashville and Los Angeles are using the CA when they record master sessions.

Now, a number of different companies have experimented with making guitars out of alternative materials in the past. What is so special about these CA guitars? The simple answer to that question, as any of the dozens of professional players who are now playing CA guitars would tell you, is that CA guitars sound more like acoustic wood guitars than any other alternate material guitar on the market. Obviously, the next question is, "How did they do it?"

The design for the CA carbon fiber guitar was the brainchild of Ellis Seal, a chemical engineer who was working in the aerospace industry designing carbon fiber and composite components for the space shuttle. After spending fifteen years in the corporate world, and becoming frustrated with the bureaucracy, Seal decided to turn his knowledge and talent towards something he loved, acoustic instruments. His genius in designing the CA guitars was to devise a technique that enabled him to take carbon fiber (which by nature wants to sound metallic and tinny) and engineer it so that it would produce the same tonal response of fine tone woods. The process he developed, which he has patented and calls "acoustic tailoring," involves layering sheets of carbon fiber fabric with sheets of micro-balloon fabric and using a specific epoxy resin formula to bond these sheets together.

Barry Salinger, CA Guitars CEO and Ellis' brother-in-law, said, "Ellis weighed the attributes of wood and its ability to create sound against what composite materials do, and it was really apparent that what had been done—or what appears to have been done—with the other guitar manufactures that dabbled in composite materials was not working. You can't simply supplant carbon for wood. It just doesn't work that way. Carbon has different properties and the sound effects are different. You have to deal with the properties of the composite materials themselves and study how they respond, how their frequencies are damped, and work on that premise rather than just trading wood for carbon fiber."

By combining the micro-balloon fabric "filler" with the carbon fiber fabric on the back and sides of the guitar, Ellis was able to closely simulate the frequency response of wood. The carbon is very resonant, "live," and reflective. The micro-balloon fabric dampens and absorbs. Through

experimentation, Ellis identified a ratio between the carbon fiber and the micro-balloon fabric that would resonate at certain frequencies and dampen other frequencies, simulating the tonal characteristics of wood. The carbon fiber top was engineered to simulate the flexibility response of spruce, and the top is braced (using carbon fiber braces) with a design similar to a typical Martin Dreadnought. The first prototypes were built with a rosewood fingerboard and bridge and a bone nut and saddle. Ellis has now designed a carbon fiber fingerboard (which will never wear out), a carbon fiber bridge, and a carbon fiber saddle. The bridge was engineered to have the same acoustic characteristics as ebony, the saddle was engineered to "sound like" bone, but with a bit more brightness than ivory (more in the range of fossil ivory), and the nuts are made of TUSQ.

Once Ellis had built a prototype guitar, he wrote letters to several guitar manufactures to see if any of them were interested in his idea. His initial desire was not to manufacture these guitars himself, but to license the technology to an established guitar manufacturer. Peavey was the first company to show interest. Once Peavey took an interest in the guitar Ellis asked his brother-in-law, attorney Barry Salinger, to become involved in the legal aspects of protecting the intellectual property. Peavey, Martin, Parker, Dean, Fender and several other large guitar companies expressed interest in the guitars, but each company either wanted to manufacture the guitars overseas or have Ellis manufacture them himself. Ellis and Barry were not comfortable with overseas manufacturing. They opted to manufacture the guitars themselves, but rather than having someone else sell the guitars under their brand name, Ellis and Barry decided that it would best to start their own guitar company. Thus Composite Acoustics (CA Guitars) was born.

The next step in the development process was to show the prototype guitars to industry professionals, luthiers, and professional guitar players and seek suggestions and feedback regarding manufacturing, standardization, instrument voicing, electronics, and other various elements that would improve their product. They received a lot of valuable input from industry professionals, luthiers, and guitar technicians such as Larry Fishman (Fishman Electronics), Ken Parker (Parker Guitars), Tim Scheerhorn (Scheerhorn Guitars), Paul Beard (Beard Guitars), George Gruhn (Gruhn Guitars in Nashville), Ron Matthews (guitar tech for Steve Howe of Yes), Rich Mermer (luthier), and Charles Fox (C. Fox Guitars). Professional players who gave CA valuable input during the early stages of development included Tim Stafford, Jason Burleson, and Shawn Lane of Blue Highway; rock guitarist Monty Montgomery; country and bluegrass artist Bob Minner; noted slide guitarist Sonny Landreth; alternate tuning aficionado Sam Broussard; bassist Derek Jones (Nickel Creek); and multi-instrumentalist Dirk Powell.

Tim Stafford with his CA guitar

Barry Salinger said, "We are constantly seeking to learn how to make the instruments better. Our technology allows us to have a platform with a great number of constants. Once we have achieved a certain level in manufacturing, we have the ability to add to those constants factors that make an instrument desirable from a player's perspective. We had most of the job done, and for the refinement we would seek out information from players about what they preferred for playability, for presentation, and for tone, and that has allowed us to advance as a company. As our technology applies to all stringed instruments, we make variations to the formula and can apply it to the Dreadnought guitar, a parlor guitar, Dobro, or acoustic bass, and it still works." Barry adds, "Our instruments and manufacturing process were further refined by Rich Lasner, our Vice President of Operations, whose resume includes work with Modulus, Yamaha, Peavey, and Ibanez. Rich was the former President of Modulus, designed the Pacifica acoustic guitars for Yamaha, the Gem (Steve Vai, Joe Satriani and Paul Gilbert) guitars for Ibanez, and served as a noted guitar industry consultant before accepting a full-time position with CA."

Currently CA is manufacturing two different Dreadnought guitar models (each with two different options) and two different Dreadnought style acoustic basses (one fretted and one fretless). The standard acoustic guitar model is the Legacy. This model retails for $1299.00 with hard shell case. The second option on the Legacy model, called the Bluegrass Performer ($1399), is similar in design to the standard Legacy, but the materials construction is varied in order to provide a different voicing for bluegrass application. Tim Stafford of Blue Highway gave valuable input, which helped with the design of this model. The second model, the Legacy AE, is the same as the Legacy model, but with added electronics. The standard Legacy AE comes equipped with a Fishman pickup and gooseneck microphone system with onboard blender, which was specifically design by Larry Fishman for application in the CA guitars. The second option on the Legacy AE is the "Crown of Thorns" model designed with the help of Bob Minner of the Tim McGraw band. On this model a red crown of thorns inlay design encircles the sound hole and the electronics include the L. R. Baggs I-beam and under the saddle pickup blended system. The Legacy AE retails for $1499.99.

The back, sides, neck, and peg head of the CA guitars are all molded into one piece. The back, sides, and braces are constructed out of a combination of carbon fiber fabric, micro-balloon fabric "filler," and a resinous epoxy bonding compound. The carbon fiber fabric and micro-balloon fabric are layered into a mold with coats of the bonding

compound painted between—and allowed to saturate into—each layer. The neck and peg head are formed with uni-directional carbon fiber strands and epoxy resin compound laid around a foam core neck piece. A carbon fiber "elbow" is placed in the neck joint for extra strength. Once the materials have been placed in the mold, a vacuum bagging process is applied in order to squeeze out any excess resin and hold the materials firmly in place. The mold is then placed into an oven to cure the epoxy.

The tops are made from carbon fiber fabric and epoxy resin. Since the neck and body are all one piece, there is no way to change the neck angle. You cannot adjust a truss rod or reset the neck once this piece has been constructed. Therefore, before the top is epoxied onto the body, the bonding angle of the top is trimmed to match the neck angle. In other words, the body is cut to an angle which is consistent with the neck angle and thus provides the correct string height over the length of the entire fretboard. Instead of setting the "neck angle," as in traditional guitar building, CA sets the "top angle." All CA guitars are sent to owners with three different saddle heights so that players will be able to adjust the action to their particular preference. The fingerboard and bridge are attached with epoxy. Carbon fiber is 10 times stronger than steel with only 20% of the weight, so trimming is done with diamond-bladed wet saws. Drilling the sound hole and the holes for the endpin, bridge pins, and tuning machines is accomplished using diamond-coated drill bits.

When I visited the CA factory in Lafayette, Louisiana, in October of 2002, I started to ask sales manager Dennie Edwards about the strength and durability of the carbon fiber materials. Sitting next to his desk was a CA guitar which had yet to have the top glued on. He picked up the one-piece body, neck, and peg head, placing his hands on either side of the guitar's lower bout. He stood up, brought the guitar up over his head (peg head pointing towards the ceiling) and then quickly and vigorously brought the guitar down towards the cement floor like a lumberjack swinging an axe. As my mouth dropped wide open, I witnessed the peg head of the guitar slam into the floor. The guitar was unharmed. As if that was not enough, Dennie then set the guitar body down on the floor (top side down) and began jumping up and down on the guitar's back. Again, no damage! I had no more questions about strength and durability. I also had no doubt that I could check my CA guitar on to an airplane in just a gig bag and not be worried about it being damaged.

More and more professional guitar players are starting to use the CA guitars on the road. Former bluegrass guitarist (Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver) Jimmy Stewart, who is now playing with the country act Brooks and Dunn, says, "In my opinion, there is not a guitar on the market in this price range that will come anywhere close to the tone of a Legacy AE. As a matter of fact, I would put it up against a lot of guitars in the $2500 to $3000 range. If you did happen to find something comparable in the same price range, I'll bet that you just lucked out and got one out of about a dozen of that same model that happened to sound good. On the one hand I am amazed at the consistency of these CA guitars and on the other, it only makes sense that every one of them would sound the same."

Other bluegrass players who now own a CA guitar include Jody King, Jon Randall Stewart, Tim Stafford, Shawn Lane, and Bryan Sutton. Jody King (whose bluegrass resume includes Lost & Found, After 5, Lou Reid and Carolina, and New Vintage) says, "Anywhere we play, whether in the studio, on stage, or just plain old jamming, the Legacy AE is my instrument of choice. I sold my axe of 12 years after having this guitar for a month."

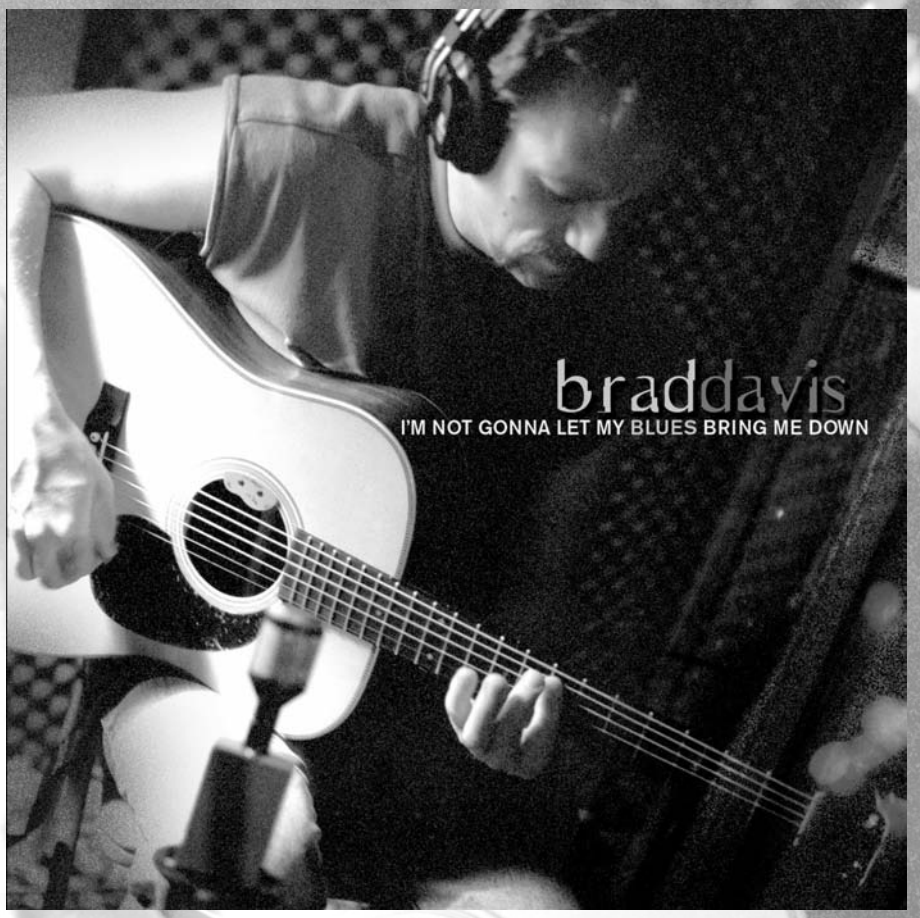
Regarding his CA guitar, Tim Stafford said, "Everywhere we play folks are curious about my CA guitar. First they ask about the color since they don't see many black guitars in bluegrass bands. After I tell them a little about the company and how the guitar is built their eyes widen. No one expects a composite guitar to have such a rich tone. It ain't wood but it's hard to tell the difference! CA Guitars has raised the bar not just a notch but a whole foot for other guitar manufacturers!" Regarding recording with his CA, Tim said, "The CA guitars are easily the best sounding new guitar I've heard in the studio. The balance is amazing—everyone talks about how good it sounds on playback. The only thing they can't believe is that it's not made out of wood." You can hear Tim play his CA guitar on the audio CD that accompanies this issue.

Shawn Lane, who plays mandolin and fiddle with Blue Highway, also owns a CA guitar. Shawn says, "These guitars are the most inspiring things that I've played for a long time. Besides having a warm, vintage tone, they're set up great and play like a breeze. I can't believe they can sound like an old wooden guitar! In the living room or in the studio, these instruments ring like an old piano and have tone and volume that is unreal."

Studio musicians have also embraced this guitar. Bob Minner (see related article in this issue) used his CA guitar in the studio for the majority of Tim McGraw's newest recording. Nashville session guitarist John D. Willis (whose credits include recording with Alabama, Jo Dee Messina, John Anderson, Glen Campbell, Kenny Rodgers, Johnny Cash, Blake Shelton, Jewel, Shania Twain, and Emmylou Harris, to name a few) has been using a CA Legacy AE in the studio for the past year. Bluegrass super session player Bryan Sutton was impressed when he saw John Willis' CA and ordered one for himself. When asked about his interest in the CA guitars Bryan said, "I think that it is good to keep an open mind about where guitar building can go and not assume that every acoustic guitar has to be a mahogany or rosewood Dreadnought. I've always been interested in playing guitars made out of non-traditional woods or other materials. I can always find uses for different guitars, especially in the studio." Guitar legend James Burton and LA session master Dean Parks also now own and use CA guitars.

Although the CA Guitar Company is still very young, their guitars are catching on quickly in the acoustic guitar market. With the rising cost of fine acoustic wood guitars, having a durable guitar that sounds great is an option that many guitar players find attractive. I enjoy the sound, look, and feel of a finely crafted acoustic wood guitar as much as anyone, and I love the wood guitars that I own. However, having the CA guitar has allowed me to travel to various harsh climatic conditions and not worry about the effects those conditions will have on my instrument. I have played in dozens of jam sessions since I got my CA and I have also recorded with it in the studio. There has not been one instance were I felt like my CA was lacking in any way.

If you would like to find out more about CA guitars, visit their website at www.caguitars.com, or send email to info@caguitars.com.



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NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

Sustained Notes

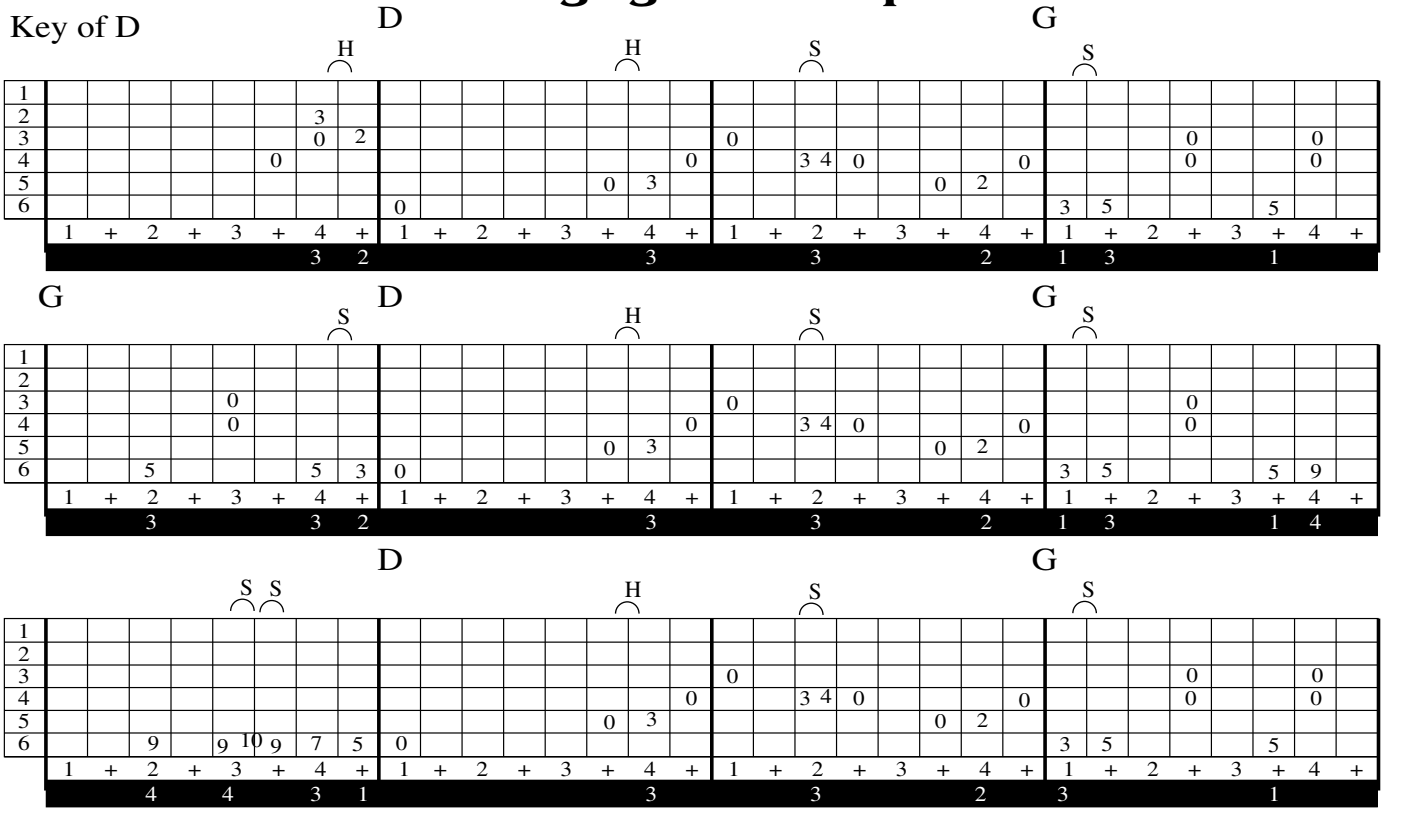
Leaving notes to sustain over the top of melody lines or lick lines can be very interesting. This type of application is usually more open-sounding and less cluttered. The opposite would obviously be a set of measures that contain more notes that are packed into a phrase that leave no spaces for the ear to rest. There are several keys that work well with sustain; the one I have picked for this example is the key of D. I have tuned my guitar to "drop D," bringing my low E, or sixth string, down to a D note. During this exercise notice that I have allowed a note here and there to ring over the top of consecutive notes that follow in the progression. This is a piece that I wrote some time ago titled "Dredging the Swamp." I write certain things when I get in the mood and that day was to write something haunting and slow and somewhat like syrup, a very thick swampy syrup. Experiment with this for a bit and then I would suggest that you apply this treatment to another key or just make up your own version in the "drop D" open tuning. Have fun and good luck!

Audio CD
Track 20

Dredging the Swamp

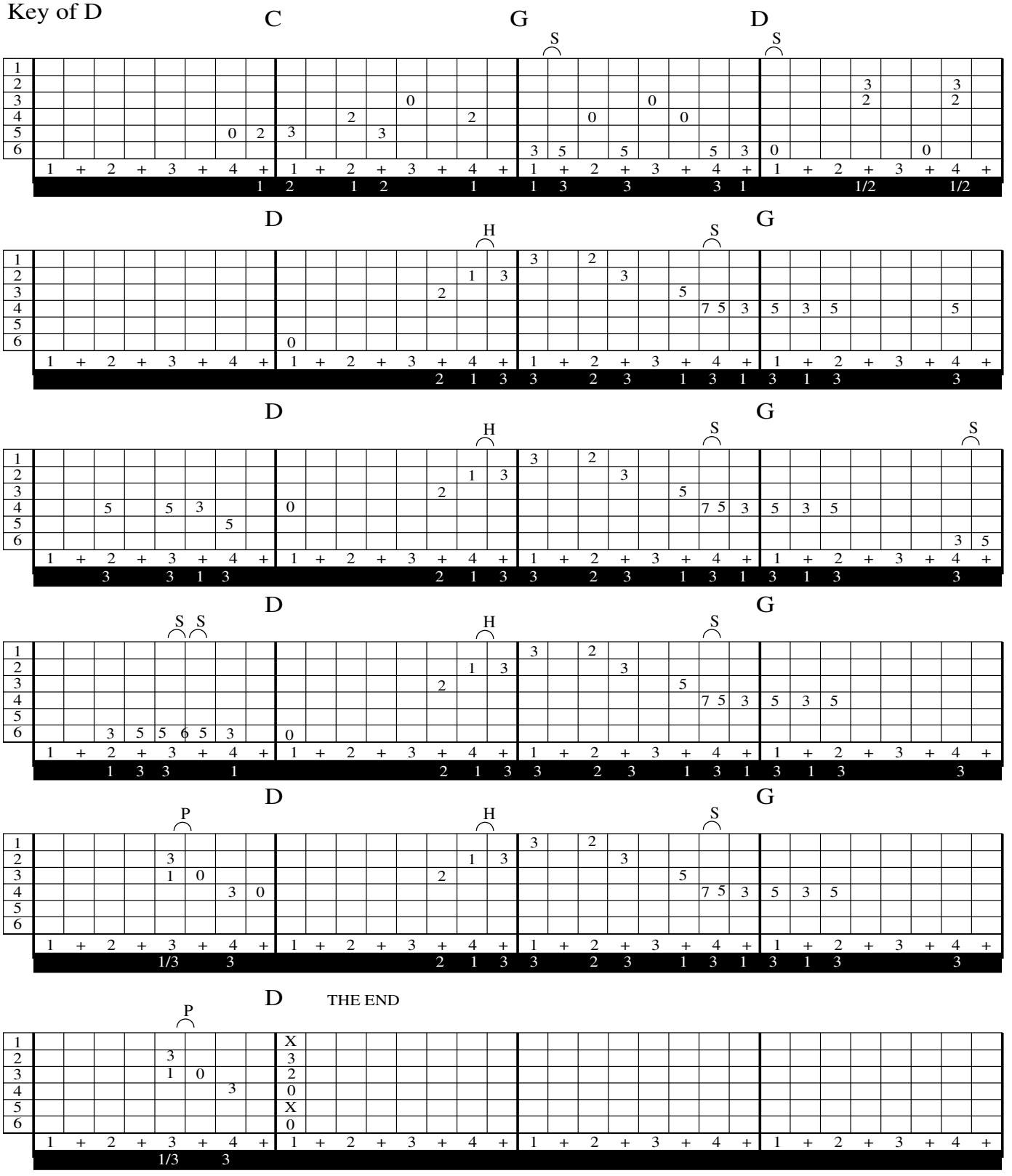
Arranged by Brad Davis

Key of D



Dredging the Swamp (con't)

Key of D



The Solo Flatpicker

by Dan Crary

Explorations in "A"

In this series of workshops I've been operating on the assumption that there are a lot of solo flatpickers who play alone, accompany themselves as a singer and/or songwriter, play in church, play for community groups, and so on. It's a lonely place to be, and these columns are designed to give you some ideas to fatten up the role your guitar plays in these solo situations. "Fatten" is the right word, because the problem with solo flatpicking is that it has the reputation of being "thin," especially when compared to the fat sound produced by a fingerpicker or a band full of people playing accompaniment, leads, and so.

Today, let's look at some of the possibilities in the open position key of A major. It's a strangely neglected key among open-string players, maybe because the fifth is on the first string, but more likely because four of the scale notes have been sharped. I guess if we taught the key of A to start, then we'd all have trouble figuring out C. All that aside, the key has many possibilities, and what makes it interesting is that most traditional players have not been there much, so the key sounds different and original.

First, some simple accompaniment licks…well, actually not so simple, because while measure #1 is the basic church-lick bass-strum accompaniment lick, measures 2 & 3 are actually arpeggios or "crosspicking" licks you should know. These can be played fast, but they're mainly slow licks that sound very pretty behind a vocal line or a slow instrumental part played by a fiddle or other instrument with some nice sustain or tremolo. Try vocalizing over these licks. They have to become automatic before you can do it, but just like patting your head and rubbing your stomach, you can do both after a while.

Measure 4 introduces an odd little open-position 9th chord (Chord #1) which sounds somewhat strident by itself, but it becomes beautiful as accompaniment to a vocal or instrumental line that has lots of "major" feel. Try singing any familiar major-key song over this A9 and see how it provides a sort of wistful-pretty affect to the song. See? I knew you'd like that magic little chord in context. Then, try playing the chords tabbed in measures #5-9 (chords #2-4) and you have that same A9 along with a D9 and an E, but all have the A root on the bottom. This achieves not only a little of the 9th chord wistful feel, but it continues it through the D and E with the A root to give continuity.

Notice that all this works best in slow, quiet music, but some of it will translate to hard-driving backup after you've got it rehearsed and smooth. Here's an assignment: practice playing these chords by themselves to develop familiarity, then think of a slow song you already know and try substituting these chords for what you've played under the song before. Then try them with a faster, more driving piece, and adapt any part of them you can to the faster tempo. As I always want to remind all of us, these concepts are not cast in stone (or tab). Instead they're ideas that can be warped around differently to fit tempo changes or any other shift in the music.

Now, I want to remind you of a chord idea we discussed in an earlier column, one that happens to work in this key. First, go looking for all the A chords that you can finger on the 5th, 4th, and 3rd strings, and then play those chords along with the open 5th and 1st strings. In other words, find some different A inversions on the fingered strings, and play them with the same open strings, then you find spots in songs or other pieces you play to substitute these new inversions in places where you otherwise played the standard version of the chord. OK, so far so good. The "new" A chords sound pretty cool, and they help get you unstuck from the open position. I'll even show you where the newly inverted A chords fall (see chords #5-8).

But the best payoff of this idea is yet to come! Following this same idea, I want you to find the other chords in the key of A (let's say E, D, and maybe G), but again, I want you to find them on the same three strings. You'll find that on strings #2-4 there will be around four different places where you can find an E, a D, and a G chord. And here's something surprising and very useful: these E, D and G chords also sound very pretty over the open 5th and 1st strings from the root A chord. In other words, once you've found some of these little 3-string chords, your backup or accompaniment in the key of A starts sounding very different, feels different, and significantly expands your options in the key of A.

But wait, as they say on infomercials, there's more! The "more" is that every time you learn a new chord or position or run or just about anything, the next step is to fool around with it to make it different. Some of the experimental changes you try whilst fooling around will sound like "yuck" and you'll discard them. But keep at it and maybe by mistake you'll stumble on a variation that works. There is a term for this experience: it's called TEACHING YOURSELF HOW TO PLAY THE GUITAR, and you need to be giving yourself that experience more often and learning yet-another-tab less often. Doc Watson has famously said that if you make a mistake, go back and repeat it so people will think it's part of the arrangement. On the other hand, if it sounds good, memorize it and make it part of your effort to teach yourself how to play the guitar.

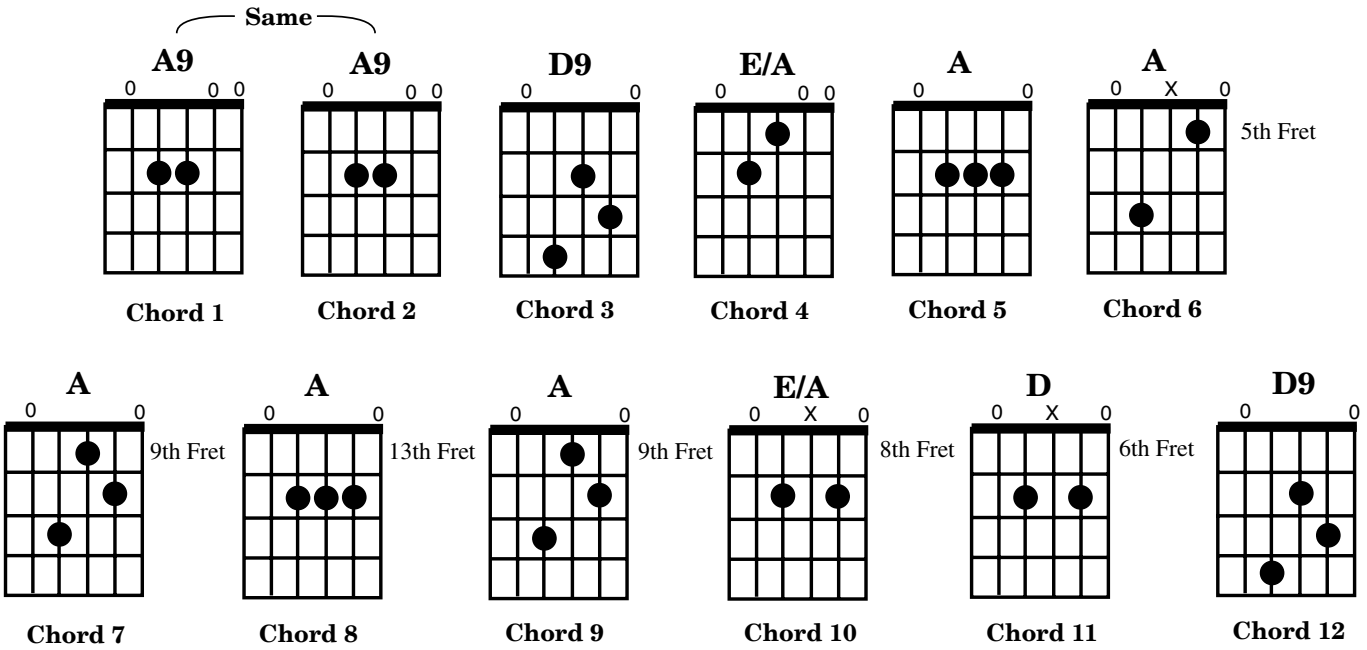
Here's an example of how learning those little 3-string chords can take you someplace else: instead of just strumming the little partial chords, why not turn them into pretty little crosspicking opportunities? Take any chord that you create using the formula above (that is, make an A or E or D or G chord on strings #2-4) and play it along with the open 5th and 1st strings. Now, you can strum it (sounds nice) or you can crosspick it by making up a pattern. You can find your own, but here's a suggestion: pick strings 5, 2, 4, 1, down-up, down-up. In other words, down on 5, up on 2, down on 4, up on 1. Then notice that all these little chords on A sound good using this pattern, and as you move from chord-to-chord (keeping the 5-2-4-1 pattern going) it starts to sound like some serious music right away.

I didn't tab out the pattern because I'm trying to get you to think about the guitar and how it works, rather than thinking about yet-more-tab. However, I did tab out an example of the pattern working through several of these little chords. The chords are charted as #10-12. The tab is just intended to get you to see how the 5-2-4-1 pattern works, and it'll work better if you get away from the tab and figure out your own cool stuff using this method.

So today's material will yield to the systematic messing around that, ultimately, is you teaching yourself how to play one of these things. Good luck, let me know how it works, and when I'm old and laid up in the retirement home, stop by and play me a nice song accompanied by an A chord up the neck and a pretty little crosspicking pattern.

Exploration in A:

Exploration in A Chords:



Clinch Mountain Guitar with James Shelton

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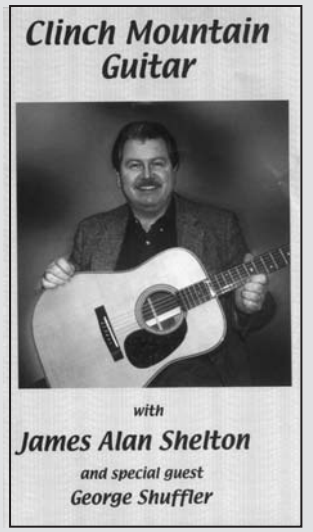

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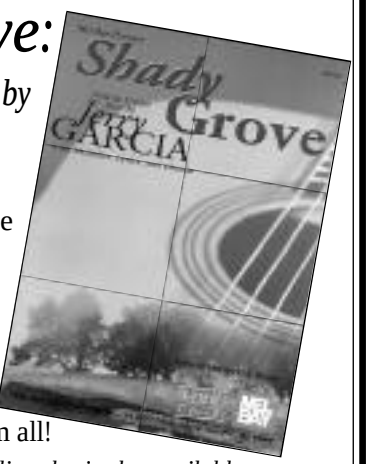

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Masters of Rhythm Guitar

D. L. Menard

The Cajun Rhythm Machine

by Dan Miller

If you are a fan of good Cajun music, you might want to look up at the stars and give a nod of thanks to Hank Williams, Sr. Did Hank Williams play Cajun music? Well, no. The reason we are thanking Hank for Cajun music is not because he played the music, but because he had a direct effect on the spread of Cajun music outside of Louisiana in the advice he lent to a young D. L. Menard. Although D. L. is the man who spread the music, it was Hank's advice to D. L. that gave Menard the confidence and encouragement he needed to promote Cajun music worldwide.

In 1949, when he was 17 years old, D. L. Menard started playing music in a Cajun band at a dance hall in Abbeville, Louisiana, near his hometown of Ertha. The owner of the dance hall insisted that the band take requests. At the time, the most popular music in Louisiana was country music and the most popular country artist was Hank Williams, Sr. D. L. said, "The reason why I got in the band was to sing some Hank Williams songs. In those days our music had died out. The Cajun music had went down and the country and western music took over. In those days, a Cajun band that could not play some country songs, what we called 'Hillbilly music,' was not considered a band. You were looked down on for playing Cajun music. If your band couldn't play country music, you weren't even considered a real band—you were just considered "back porch" musicians. You had to be able to play some country songs in order to get a job in the dance halls. If you couldn't play the requests you couldn't stay in the hall long. Hank Williams was the most popular one, so they requested his songs."

In 1951, D. L. met Hank Williams at the Teche Club in New Iberia, Louisiana. He says, "During the first intermission that Hank took I talked with him for about ten minutes. I still have my autograph picture! I told him that I started playing in a band mainly to play his songs and he thanked me for it! He told me, 'Remember, the more popular you get, the more you have to talk to the people.' I said, 'Oh, yea?' He said, 'Its not the cats and the dogs that buys your records. Tonight I am your employee, I'm working for you tonight.' I said, 'You working for me? What you mean Hank?' He said, 'Well, you paid to come in here.' I said, 'Yea.' He said, 'If you weren't here do you think Hank would be here? You think that fella in the back of the bar can afford to hire me if you all weren't here?' "

Hank Williams also gave D. L. some advice about singing songs. D. L. remembers, "Hank told me, 'When you sing, you have to sing from your heart.' I said to myself, 'Sing a song through your heart? I sing a song with my mouth!' That is exactly what I thought! I said, 'What you mean Hank?' He named me a certain song and said 'Is that a sad song?' I said, 'Yea.' He said, 'Well there you go.' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'How would you feel if it would be happening to you?' I said [sadly], 'Oh.' He said, 'That is what you have to do. Pretend it is happening to you and that feeling is going to come out on that record. You remember that when you start recording.' I said, 'Hank, I'll never record. It is Cajun music that we are playing. That is not music to put on records.' He said, 'It is yours isn't it?' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'It is your music?' I said, 'Well, that is the music that I grew up with.' He said, 'All regional music is good. If it is yours, it is good. I love all music. All music is good.' "

D. L. said, "Hank Williams was the reason I started playing music and after I met him it inspired me even more." Since that day in 1951 D. L. Menard has taken Hank Williams' advice to heart. He has been performing and pleasing crowds, talking to the people, singing from his heart, and writing and recording his Cajun music. He and his band have performed all over the United States and in 36 foreign countries. His most popular song "La Porte En Arriere," or "The Back Door" has become what some call the "Cajun national anthem." In the years since the song was first recorded (1962), it has sold over half a million copies. Folklorist at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Dr. Barry Ancelet, has said that "The Back Door" is the most often played and recorded Cajun song in history.

"The Back Door" was written while D. L. was pumping gas in his hometown Erath (which has been labeled "the most Cajun place on earth") in the early 1960's. The song's melody is based on Hank William's "Honky Tonk Blues." D. L. jotted the words down on a small pad in between pumping gas and servicing cars. The song has elevated him to the status of being a "Living Legend." He has performed for Mayors, Governors, Ministers, Congressmen and Presidents. He has been called "the finest old-time entertainer in Cajun music." And his shows have been described as "a mix of irresistibly danceable music, heart-wrenching vocals, and strings of weird non-sequitors and off-

beat philosophizing." Although he has been called the "Cajun Hank Williams" quotes like "How long will I play? If I can live until I die, I'll still be playing!" may also get him dubbed as the "Cajun Yogi Berra."

D.L. Menard has received some of the most highly regarded awards in music, including a Grammy Music Award nomination for the "Best Traditional Album" in 1993. His Lifetime Achievement Award states that D.L. is "a Master Traditional Artist whose influence on generations of Cajun musicians has been immeasurable." He is in the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame and the Cajun Music Hall of Fame. In 1993, D. L. and his "Louisiana Aces" band received the Times Music Award. In 1994, he received The National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, their highest honor, which was presented to him by First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton. But D. L. has not let all of the awards and accolades go to his head, in fact when asked what the "D. L." stands for, he will usually say "Darn Lucky!"

D. L.'s first guitar was ordered from Montgomery Ward catalog ($11 postage paid). The guitar player in his uncles' Cajun band showed him a few chords and demonstrated how to strum a waltz and a two-step. D. L. says, "...and I took it from there and six months after that, when I was 17, I played my first dance job. I was determined to learn!" When asked what drew him to the guitar versus any of the other instruments in the band, D. L. said, "It just sounded good! I went to hear my uncle's Cajun band and the guitar player was making some runs to tune up the guitar before the show and when he made those runs, God, that sounded good! That done it for me! I'll never forget that!"

Shortly after he started learning how to play the guitar, D. L. ordered a Sears Silvertone guitar because the Montgomery Ward guitar was cheaply made and the strings were too high. He said, "I got me a Sears catalog to order me a Silvertone. They had a $24.95 and a 45 dollar one. Well, I couldn't get the 45 dollar one because it was a little too steep, you know. I ordered the $24.95 with the case. When it came to the post office, they had made a mistake, man. They had put the 45 dollar guitar in there. When I opened it up, I hurried up and closed it and looked around! I hurried up and went home, partner. Because, to my knowledge, the postmaster would have made me give it back. To me, he would have known that was not the guitar I ordered. He didn't know nothing, but to me, that is how I felt. I closed that case and I hurried! That is the guitar I played my first dance job with."

For the majority of his career, D. L. has traveled and performed with a three-piece band—fiddle, accordion, and guitar (the fiddle player would also switch off to play steel guitar). Thus his guitar had to serve as the entire rhythm section. The unique rhythm style which he has developed grew out of the necessity for his guitar to play the parts of the guitar, the bass, and the triangle (typically the instrument that maintains the steady back-beat in Cajun music). Thus his rhythm style is a combination of bass runs and a hard slapping back beat.

In order to achieve the percussive sound of the triangle at the end of his strums, D. L. uses a very large medium gauge triangular shaped pick (with very pointed ends) and slaps the pick on the inside of the guitar's sound hole after it snaps off of the high E string. His rhythm style is strong and aggressive. He said, "For a dance band, like a Cajun band, it makes more of a solid rhythm to have strong runs and strong back beat. The guitar is the only rhythm, it has to be a little stronger and louder." Noted for his sense of humor, D.L. suggests, "I sound like three instruments now. I need to get three paychecks! And I'm not chargin' anything for the singin'." New Orleans free-lance writer Rick Olivier has dubbed D. L. the "Cajun rhythm machine."

When asked about the strength and drive of his rhythm style, D. L. said, "Some guitar players are kind of scared to touch them strings. I say to one boy in Alabama, 'Are you scared to let the people hear you.' He said, "What you mean." I said, "How come you holding back. It sounds like you are scared to touch them strings. Apparently that guitar is playing you, you are not playing that guitar. You got to play that guitar. Don't let the guitar play you, boy." I said "Get out there, let the people hear you." D. L. adds, "When a song is softer, like a waltz, I will play softer. But if it is a happy song, I kind of push it."

In 1980 D. L. and his band embarked on a world-wide state department sponsored tour with the Whites. At that time the Whites' band consisted of Buck, Sharon and Cheryl White, Ricky Skaggs, and Jerry Douglas. After the tour was over D. L. recorded an album in Nashville which included the Whites, Jerry Douglas, and Ricky Skaggs. In the album's liner notes, Ricky Skaggs writes, "I'll never forget the first time I heard D.L. Menard. It was a foggy night at Point Bonita in the Margin Headlands across the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. A package tour was assembling for a 42,000 mile around-the-world tour. The people on the tour were John Jackson, a great bluesman from Virginia; D.L. Menard's Louisiana Aces Cajun Band; and my favorite family band, The Whites. Someone had decided that all of us should do a song or two together at the end of the show and we were there to practice, eyeing each other, wondering what to try first. Kathy James had organized the tour and she had a good suggestion. 'D.L., how about a Hank Williams song?' D.L. Sang 'House of Gold' and when Buck, Sharon and Cheryl White joined in on the first chorus I got some chill bumps and went hunting my fiddle."

To date D. L. has produced six recordings. Three of his projects are on the Rounder label, two are on the Swallow label, and one is on Arhoolie. One of his Rounder Records is a tribute to Hank Williams. On the other recordings D. L. has written almost all the songs he has recorded. Has writes both Cajun songs and country songs. On the Rounder recording which featured the Whites, "Cajun Saturday Night," half the songs are country tunes while the other half are Cajun. Regarding his song writing process, D. L. says that he writes the words first and then "makes the melody according to the words."

When asked about the CA (Composite Acoustic) guitar that he now plays, D. L. said, "Shucks man, that is the best guitar that I have ever had. The action feels good, it sounds good, and once I set the electronics on stage, that is it. You never have to touch it again. It is so easy, man. And most important, all of the strings sound at the same level. No one sounds louder than the other. That is very important. It has good balance. And the weather doesn't bother it. Once you tune it, it stays right there. You don't have to worry."

When asked if he was skeptical when he first heard about the composite guitar, D. L. said, "Yea, I said to myself, 'A plastic guitar is going to be better than a wood guitar?' But I guarantee you, I would not trade that one partner. I would not trade it, oh no. You tune it, it stays in tune and the weather don't bother it. And it sounds good, man. When you are on stage you can have your mind strictly on your performance, you don't have to worry about your instrument. That means that you can depend on your instrument and it will always be with you. That makes a difference on your performance."

D. L. Menard is a performer in the truest sense of the word. He knows how to entertain and please a crowd. I can't imagine anyone coming away from a D. L. Menard performance without having a big smile on their face, and his skill as an entertainer is certainly a big factor in the love people have developed for his brand of Cajun music.

JAM TUNES

"Wheel Hoss" with Brad Davis and Bryan Sutton

Over the past few years we have received a lot of requests for an instrumental guitar CD of "hot" guitar tunes. It is always fun for flatpickers to hear professional players go "all out" on the flatpicking standards. To that end we are in the process of putting together such a recording. In early November I took a trip to Nashville and invited some of Nashville's best flatpickers to come into Brad Davis' studio to lay down some cuts for the project. Jim Hurst, Bryan Sutton, David Grier, Brad Davis, Cody Kilby, and Tim May all came in and recorded standard flatpicking tunes in duet. As you can imagine, the sessions were awesome. Not only did these talented pickers perform as expected, each of the pairs who recorded together added there own "twist" to the songs that they recorded. David Grier and Bryan Sutton played a jazzy version of "Back Up and Push," Brad David and Cody Kilby played a blusey, rockin' version of "Gold Rush." And Bryan Sutton and Brad Davis played "Wheel Hoss" just plain fast! You will hear Bryan and Brad's version on this issues' audio and we have transcribed Brad's first solo on the following pages. Many more great players are contributing to our new project, which will be titled *Some Like It Hot*. It should be available by May 2003.

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine pays tribute to

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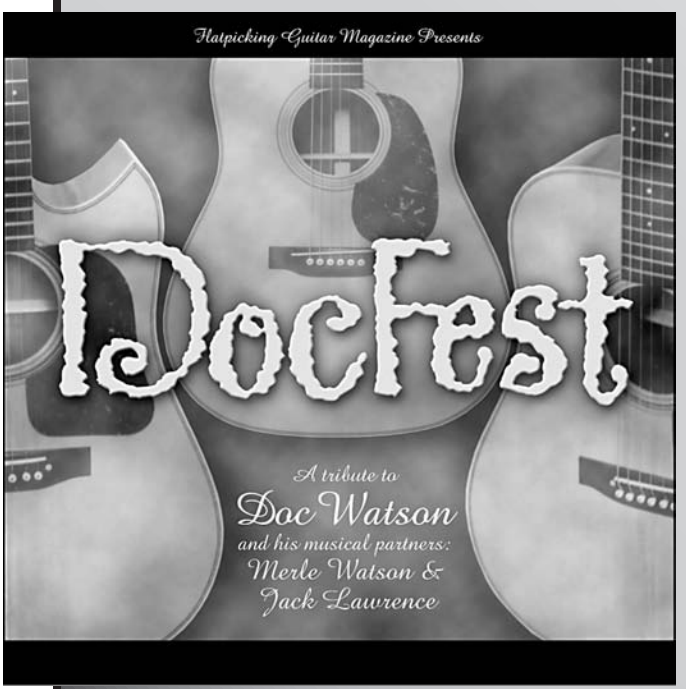

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Way Downtown (John Tindel & RST)
Cotton Eyed Joe (David Grier)
A-Roving On A Winter's Night (Chris & Sally Jones)
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Wheel Hoss

Arranged by Brad Davis

Wheel Hoss (con't)

Gypsy Jazz Guitar

by Paul Mehling

Tips for Beginners

One of the best questions that comes up from time to time in seminars that I teach is "What are some common mistakes that beginners make?"

There are many aspects of Gypsy-style guitar playing that are strikingly different from what we here in the U.S. (Gringo-World) are doing. The first and most obvious is the way that two people with guitars set about making music: one plays rhythm and one plays lead. Duh? Not so fast! If you've ever been around folks who wouldn't want to play anything other than a Selmer copy, you know that the lead guys often want to rip! They can play some dazzlingly fast stuff, when it's their turn. Until it's that person's turn to let loose, that guitarist remains respectfully in the background laying down an uncluttered, perfectly blank canvas (if you will) on which the other guitarist can paint as he chooses.

So often in other styles of guitar jams, the rhythm playing is loose: not taut and percussive. Or it's lumpy: some chords are good and others are fuzzy and ill-defined. Or it's too fussy, with lots of flashy right hand strumming and/or too many chords! Or, on a very subtle level it's not supportive: the accompanist seems disconnected from the lead player. This can be due to a battle of egos, or a lack of respect, or even just foolishness on the part of the accompanist—but it will almost certainly be obvious to anyone listening. It may be very common for great lead players to be weak accompanists in other guitar worlds, but in the world of Gypsy jazz it's unacceptable to not do your best to make the other player(s) feel sympa (support, sympathy, brotherhood, love and unity of purpose). When Gypsy jazz guitarists speak of someone who can really play, they mean both lead and accompaniment.

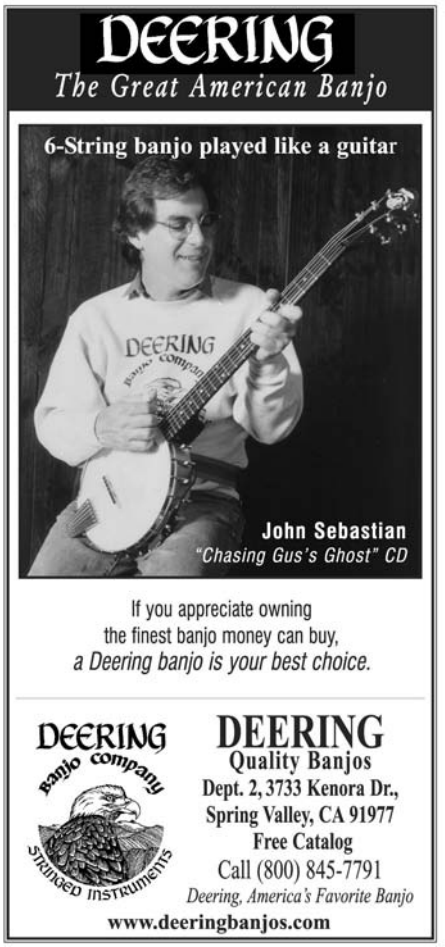
So, here's what not to do when accompanying someone:

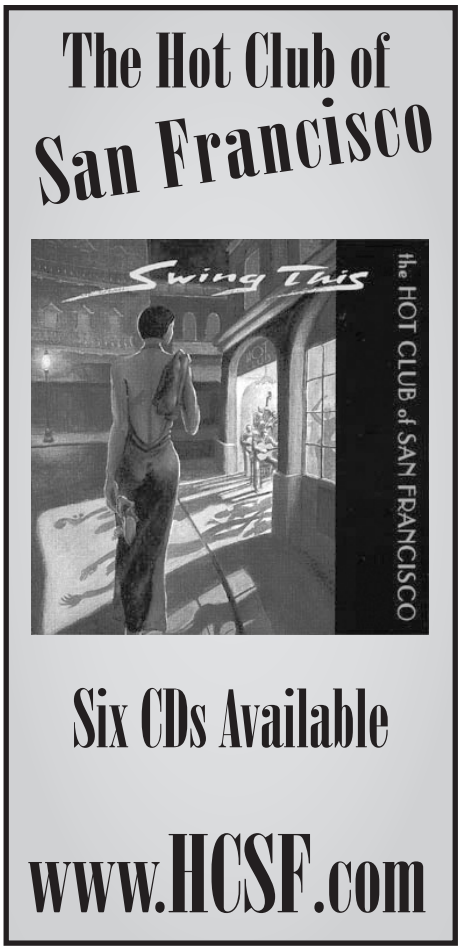
1) Don't bury them by overplaying. Lead is lead and rhythm is support. It's very cut-and-dried, refreshingly so. It's almost

like a code of ethics and a value system with Gypsy guitarists. You can always spot a beginner in a Gypsy jam, they're the one trying to be Django when they should be Joseph (the brother who was a steady and steadfast rhythm guitarist for Django).

2) Listen to the other person and see if you can think with them, and understand where they are going. How can you synch up with them? Do they want just a little less energy or speed from you? Or do they want a little more energy? This is often a problem with beginners. They don't have enough confidence in their own ability to play rhythm without another instrument (guitar or bass or…). The solution for this is tons of practice with the metronome and (more importantly) tons of observing while you play with others. They'll let you know either verbally or just by the way they're playing if you're making them comfortable or uncomfortable. Sometimes in my band, when the guys are really playing tight (together, like a tightly-woven fabric on which you can bounce, like a trampoline) they'll remark that I'm having a "good" day playing lead, to which I always reply "If I sound good, it's because you guys are playing great." There's no way around it: the accompanist can make or break the soloist, therefore a great accompanist is worth his weight in gold.

3) Don't play too many chords. Playing rhythm is not your turn to show off. Unless you're really well connected to the other player (either by blood or experience together or some cosmic good luck) don't do too much that the other guitar will have





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to anticipate or accommodate. For instance, if you play a substitution like Bb7 instead of E7 at the end of "Minor Swing" (even though you know you've heard Django do it), that doesn't mean that the person who is playing lead with you will expect – or even want – that substitution. The soloist might not be familiar with the nuance and won't know what to do or what to play over it, so they have to accommodate you. They'll have to do something because you threw it out there into the air, and the soloist is either going to sound good or bad because of you.

The other person may not even want to hear that substitution because they may have an opinion about it. This is another very common mistake beginners make: the "Look What I Just Learned!" They throw things out that they think are new and exciting, but which others may think sound stupid or over-used. Talking between tunes can be a good way to check these things out, before throwing them around dangerously!

4) Don't play chords which use the high E-string. It seems very limiting to avoid that string, but the soloist is working in that register, usually. And if you're there throwing in 6s or 7s on top of your chords (right?) you might be getting in his way and diluting or compromising the ideas he's spinning.

Similarly with bass players: They usually hate it if you voice your chords too frequently on the low E-sting, since it gets in their way. This is why in my videos I talk about the "inside" chords (inside the low and high E strings) as being the best for rhythm playing. After all, you want people to like playing with you, right? So, stay out of their way, listen, and groove!

5) Don't play tunes you don't know. At very least, admit that you don't know a tune and ask for information ("say, what are the chords there?"). Nothing is more exasperating—in any genre of guitar playing—than the person who thinks bluffing is preferable to learning. Many tunes have chords that are agreed upon, while other tunes have many different ways of being played. Again using "Minor Swing" as an example, I've heard folks at jam sessions ask whether to use the "Reinhardt chords" or the "Grisman chords." That's because David Grisman recorded the tune with Stephane Grappelli in the 80s using his own arrangement of the tune, which included a bridge that Django didn't originally intend.

6) Don't solo on a tune if you don't know the chords. Like #5, this should be obvious, isn't it?

7) Don't play faster than you actually can. This is the most common and the hardest bad habit to break, once you develop it. Many guitarists get into Gypsy guitar because they like the aspect of speed. Close inspection of most Reinhardt recordings will show that he rarely played a lot of notes fast. He played hot and he played at fast tempos, but the idea of playing everything-including-the-kitchen-sink-so-fast-that-you-can't-quite-hear-it-going-by is very amateurish, especially when the player cannot pull it off. Speed is cool, but it's not everything. Those of you who know what happened to contest fiddling will understand what I mean when I say that this genre seems to going in the same direction-unless we speak up now! Just play tasty! No speed-for-speed's sake. Just say no!

All of these suggestions are rules that I've observed from many many visits to the Django Reinhardt festival in Samois, France as well as other informal get-togethers on the streets, in cafes, concerts, and numerous other situations. In any style of music (or any art for that matter) there are always traditions that define the genre. That's what makes Gypsy guitar different from bluegrass, and other genres. Rules are made to be broken (they don't call me Pazzo for nothin') but, you need to learn the rules first.

Respect for the idiom is an absolute requirement for anyone planning on over-throwing the status quo. Django invented this pioneering world music by combining Eastern European folk music with the French tradition of Musette and Java (etc.) with American jazz and came up with what is now called Gypsy jazz (in Europe "Jazz Manouche") or Gypsy swing. He broke the rules, but he first learned the rules of many genres before asserting himself upon the world. Check your ego at the door and let the music come through your ears and out of your fingers. Don't let your fingers run around brainlessly. Play from the heart, don't play anything you don't hear, and if it don't swing, well....

Next time—more tips!
Lead playing—Right hand
Pentatonic fluff—or, using what you've got.

THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Having covered a number of fiddle tunes in my last few columns I thought it was time for a hot-but-doable solo to a vocal standard.

"Sitting on Top of the World" is a "crossover" hit, popular in both the bluegrass and and acoustic blues genres, and one I've long enjoyed playing (on both guitar and banjo).

This version is one which I first heard when I was a teenager, as played by Bottle Hill, the cool New Jersey bluegrass band at the time.

While this solo developed organically through performing, viewing it in hindsight I see that I have turned to all of the usual suspects for color and dynamics: strums; rest strokes (indicated by > above the note); double-stops; and a quick floating lick. In sum, it's a complete flatpicking meal. Bon appetite!

'Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro' Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion *and is the author of* Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar. *See www.flatpick.com/ostar.*

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Sitting On Top Of The World

Arranged by Orrin Star

"All of Me" Part II
Melody
by Dix Bruce

In my last column you learned how to move the chord progression for "All of Me" through several keys and positions. In this column we'll do the same thing with the song's melody. We'll apply the same theory and process to transposing the melody that we applied to transposing the chords.

But first, let's pick up where we left off last time. As you recall, we learned two basic sets of closed position (no open strings) chord changes for "All of Me," first in the key of C, then in the key of F. We moved the C position to Bb, moved the F position to Eb, and finally moved the C position to Ab. If you tried to move the F position to Db, you discovered that you quickly run out of fingerboard. What can you do in a case like this?

Solution number 1: Instead of using the F position chords for Db, why not use the C position chords and move them up one fret or half step from the C position?

Solution number 2: Mix chords from both sets of changes and positions. To do this you'll need to identify the chords in the key of Db both by function and letter name and plug them in. The chords are shown below.

Once again the last two measures of the progression show chords I to I7, or Db6 to Db7. Use the Db7 chord if you modulate to the key of Gb. If you continue with another chorus of the song in Db substitute an Ab7, or V chord, for the Db7. If you're ending the song, play a second measure of Db6.

One more thing before we move on: If you follow the modulation plan we set up in the last column (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db), your next key after Db will be Gb and you'd start with the C position chords at the second fret. As with the F position chords in the key of Db, you run out of fingerboard. Again, one option is to switch to the F position chords and play them one fret higher than the original F position or at the seventh fret. Of course you can also mix and match chords from the two positions as we did with the Db progression. Be sure to work through both of these options for the key of Gb. Now on to transposing the melody of "All of Me."

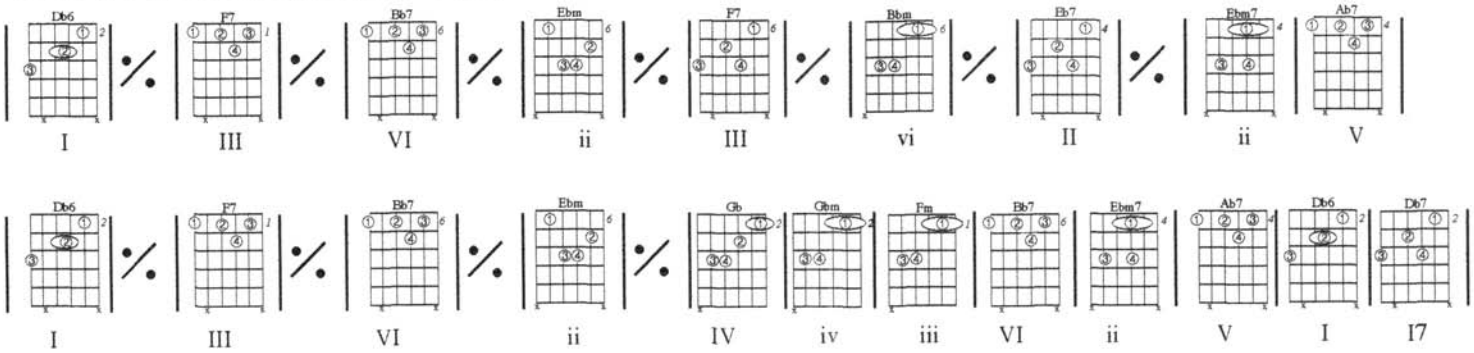
Let's start by looking at "All of Me" in the key of C. In the version presented here, the melody is shown one octave higher than in the last column. Just like we did with the chords, we'll learn the melody in a "closed position": we won't use any open string notes. The advantage of learning a melody in a closed position is that it can be moved easily, just like closed position chords, to many different keys and positions up or down the fingerboard. When you learn a melody in a closed position, you can almost always move it to ten, twelve, or more different positions and keys. A melody with open strings can't be moved as easily.

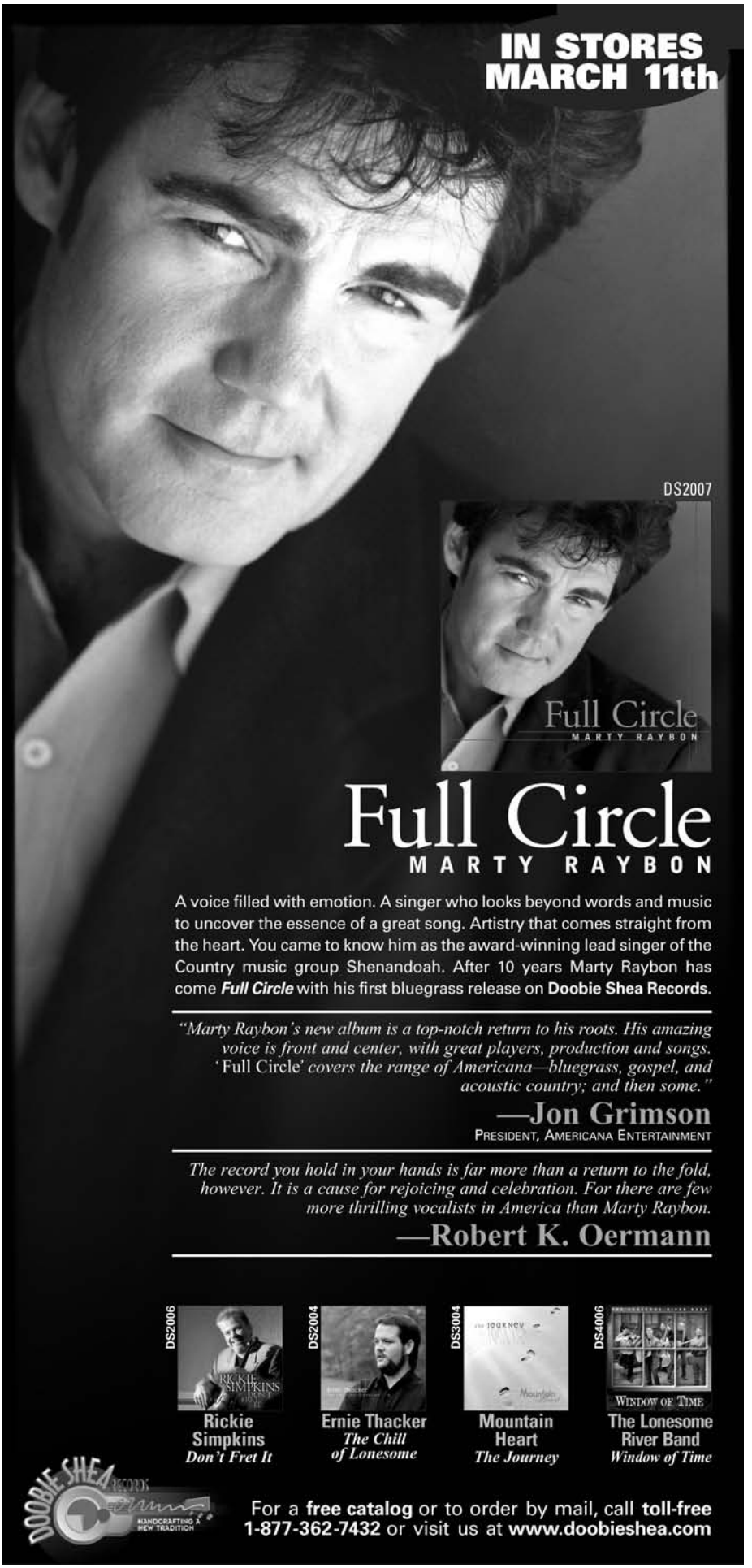
The small numbers between the standard notation and the tablature are fretting hand fingerings. Memorize the melody as shown starting with your first finger at the eighth fret. Break the melody down into the phrases that fit over each chord change and relate the way each phrase is situated on the fingerboard to the chord it's being played over. Learn to play the melody, top to bottom, with your eyes closed. Work at visualizing these positions in your head.

Also memorize how your fretting hand moves as it goes from the C to E7 phrases (I to III); from E7 to A7 (III to VI); from A7 to Dm (VI to ii), and so on. Try to visualize how, when taken together, these phrases and positions outline a region or neighborhood of the fingerboard. Once you understand how they fit together and can see it in your mind's eye, it will be much easier to move the whole melody to different positions and keys on the fingerboard.

This is exactly the same process you used in the last column with chords. It may take you hours, days, or weeks to master the melody to "All of Me" in this position in the key of C but it is important to have it memorized before you move on. Practice

All of Me Chord chart #1 (Key of Db)

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playing along with the recorded version on the audio CD accompanying this issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*.

Now let's look at another closed position version of "All of Me," this time in the key of F with the first note at the sixth fret of the second string. Just as you did with the melody in the key of C, learn where the notes fall and the shapes they make up as you play them. Again, memorize how your fretting hand moves and try to visualize how these phrases and positions outline a region of the fingerboard. Practice until you can play it with your eyes closed, until you can feel it, and until you can see it in your mind's eye.

Once you've mastered both the C and F positions, it's time to try moving each around the fingerboard. You'll remember from the previous column that our task was to play "All of Me" in several keys and modulate from C to F to Bb to Eb to Ab and so on. You've already got C and F covered so now try moving your closed C position melody down two frets to Bb. I've presented the first eight measures to get you started.

Now move the F position melody down two frets to the key of Eb. Again, I've given you the first eight measures to get you started.

When you feel comfortable with these first modulations, try every other position you can reach on the fingerboard. Be sure to identify each key and the chords that go with each new position. If you run out of fingerboard in certain keys and positions, try mixing these two positions. For an extra challenge, refer back to the last column and learn the closed position melody from the key of C shown in the lower octave. Once you know it, move it around. You'll give both your head and hands a great workout and over time will teach yourself to play "All of Me" in any key, in several different positions. Ain't the guitar grand?

Dix's book Shady Grove: Acoustic Guitar Solos by Jerry Garcia is currently available. It includes lyrics, chords, melodies, and Jerry's solos in standard notation and tablature from the Shady Grove CD with David Grisman. First Lessons: Mandolin has just been released. Aimed at absolute beginners to the mandolin, it gets the student up and running with chords, strums, tunes and lead picking. Dix also recorded and produced Prof. Elvo D'Amante's comprehensive and excellent 12-CD, three volume ear training course. All are available through Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523 and www.musixnow.com where all can be previewed and ordered online.

Audio CD
Tracks 28

All of Me

Arranged by Dix Bruce

Simons & Marks 19

C6 E7
All of me, Why not take all of me?
A7 Dm E7
Can't you see, I'm no good with- out you? Take my lips,
Am D7
I want to lose them, Take my arms, I'll nev - er
Dm7 G7 C6 E7
use them. Your good- bye Left me with eyes that cry,
A7 Dm F Fm
How can I go on dear with- out you? You took the part that
Em7 A7 Dm7 G7 C6
once was my heart, so why not take all of me?
T A B

Audio CD
Tracks 29

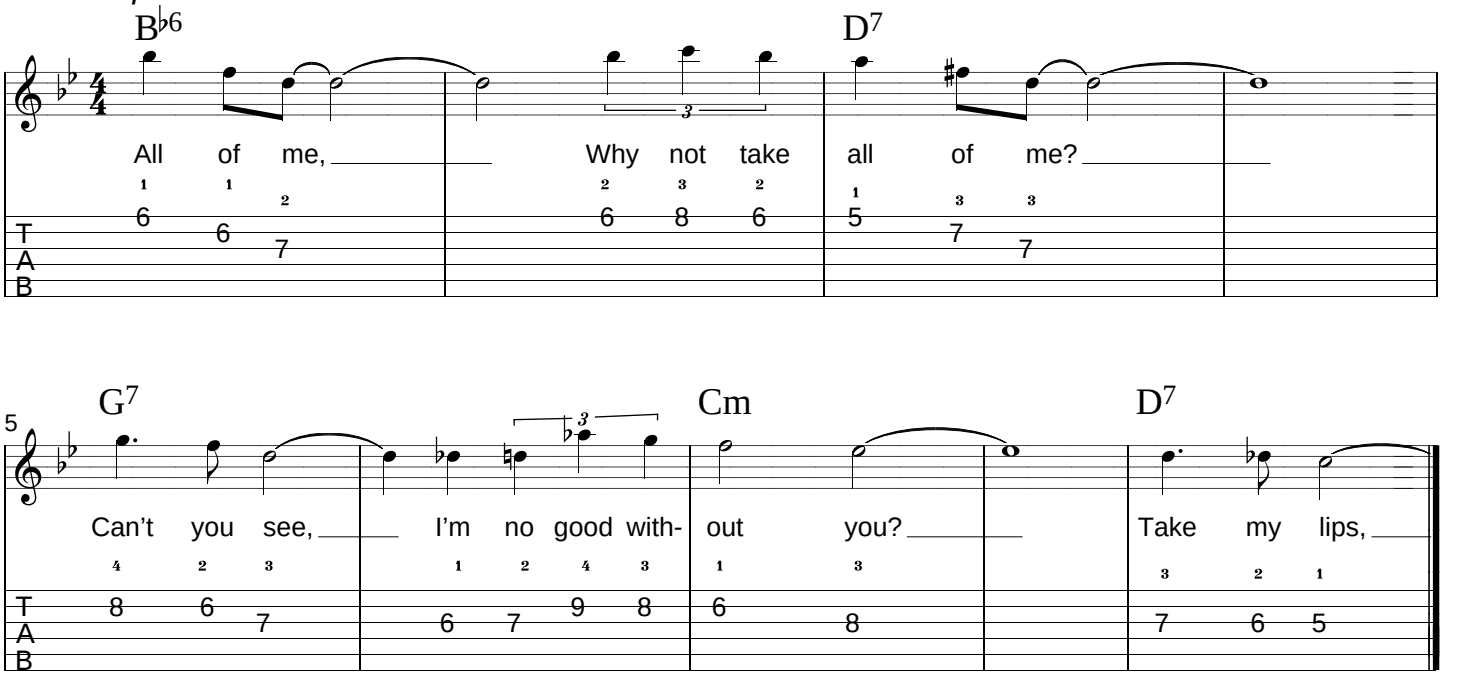
All of Me

F6 A7
All of me, Why not take all of me?
D7 Gm A7
Can't you see, I'm no good with- out you? Take my lips,
Dm G7
I want to lose them, Take my arms, I'll nev - er
Gm7 C7 F6 A7
use them. Your good - bye Left me with eyes that cry,
D7 Gm B♭ B♭m
How can I go on dear with- out you? You took the part that
Am7 D7 Gm7 C7 F6
once was my heart, so why not take all of me?

Audio CD
Tracks 30

All of Me

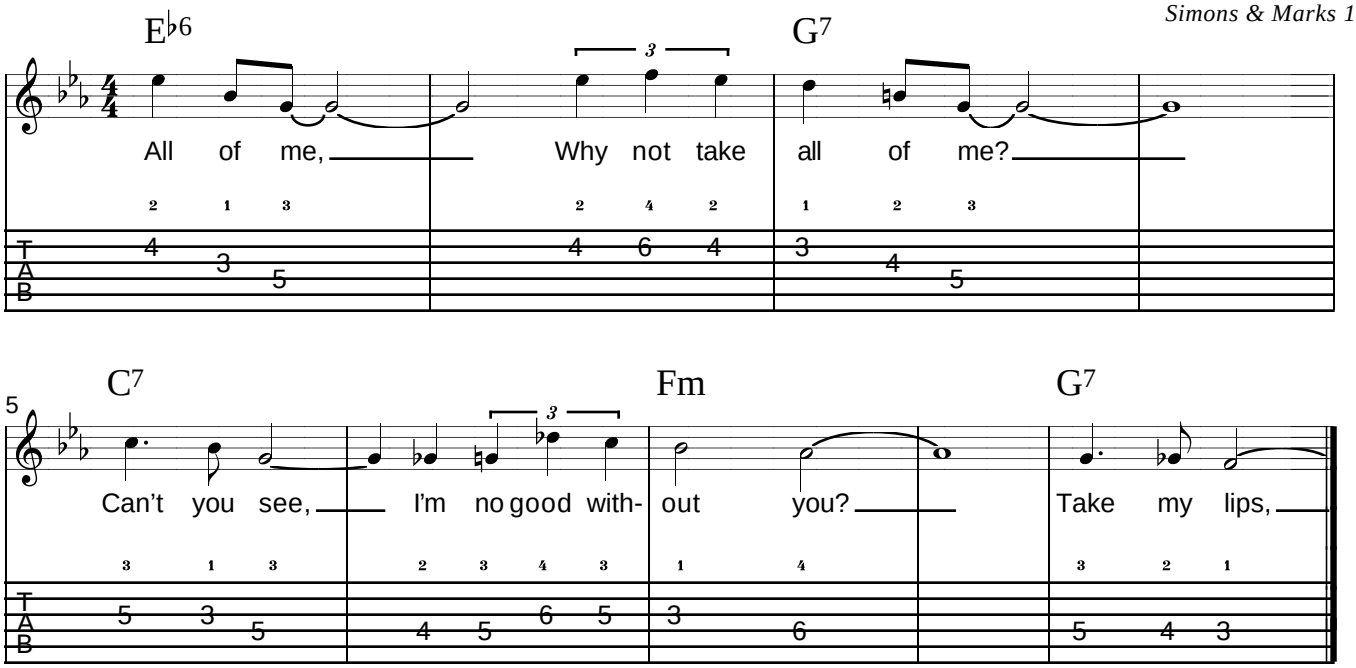
Bb excerpt



All of Me

Eb excerpt

Simons & Marks 1931



Music Theory:
Mastering the Fingerboard
Technical Studies for Flatpickers

by Michel A. Maddux

My old football coach, Fayne Hensen, was fond of shouting homilies at his players. "Take pride in effort" and "Luck is when preparation meets opportunity" were two of his favorites. He drilled us repeatedly on the fundamentals, blocking and tackling.

That's how you win ball games.

These simple rules ring true in business, and in music. The fundamentals are the key to improvement, the key to winning ballgames, and the key to proper execution on the flattop guitar.

In music, the fundamentals, the basics, the "blocking and tackling," are your knowledge of the major and minor scales and chords and knowing where to use them. When you make these exercises and scale forms a regular part of your practice routine, you gain the ability to quickly learn new songs, improve your ear, and develop improvisational ability.

Selecting Appropriate Rhythm Chords

Have you watched or listened to a great guitarist and thought, how does he know when to use those advanced or alternate chords?

Great rhythm guitarists select chords and runs that reflect or provide a harmony for the melody.

Think about a dominant 7 chord. Remember that chords are spelled using the interval notes that occur within the chord (that is, 1-3-5 is a major triad, 1-b3-5 is a minor triad, and so on).

The dominant 7 chord written out (such as G7) contains the notes 1-3-5-b7.

Now, that b7 is important, since it gives the chord its flavor. It doesn't work everywhere. You have to pay attention to the song before you use it, because if the melody note is a natural 7th, playing the flat 7 would not sound right. Also, some chord progressions work together in a song, but not in a different song. Let your ears be your guide.

Also, normally in written music, the dominant 7 chord is written, e.g. G7. The major 7th chord, less often used in bluegrass, is always written as Gmaj7, to denote that the 7th is natural. When you read a tune, watch the notation to be certain that it is indicating a dominant, not major, seventh chord.

In the key of G, the 7th scale degree is the F#. Remember that the key of G major has one sharp note, the F#. So, the notes in the G7 chord are: G-B-D-F, because the F# is lowered 1/2 step to the F natural. Now, if the melody note is an F#, you would not want to use the G7 chord, because it would sound bad. On the other hand, when the melody uses the flat 7 note, you can substitute the G7 chord for the G major chord, pretty much wherever you want—and this rule of substitution is true for other extended chords, like the G9th.

The first exercise shows a lick, and the chords that fit the lick (exercise 2). I want you to play the lick, then play the rhythm using the alternate chords—and notice why the chord fits over the lick. Note that in measure three, the lick uses both the 7th and 9th scale degrees.

Use the chords in exercise 2 as examples of the kind of chordal thinking that works with the 7 and 9 runs. Note the G5 chord is the common bluegrass "power" chord. Note: You can omit the notes in parenthesis at your discretion.

Some simple rules to determine when to use this type of substitution:

- Instead of just strumming a G chord for 4 measures, use G, then G7 as long as the melody does not contain the natural 7 (such as F#)
- use 9 - to 7 - to 9 - to major
- Extended chords (such as 7s, 9s and so on) can be reduced to the root form
- Tunes that use the flat 7 (like "Gold Rush") can use the dominant 7 chord to major (as in G - G7 - G - G7 - D – G)

Exercise 3 is the G major scale form that I call the "E form," because the fingering is the same as playing first position E major. This form is really useful in helping you to develop the ability to reach for notes that are a bit of a stretch, and is less of a hand position shift to hit the high notes for certain tunes, like the one that follows. Play it entirely in third position. Notice that the scale is broken into the lower and upper octaves. You should also practice this form with the entire two octave scale (exercises 4 and 5). Note also that this fingering uses only the index, middle, and pinky; the ring finger is not used.

White Horse Breakdown

Kenny Baker played fiddle with Bill Monroe for many years. In the liner notes to Kenny's recording, *Country*, he had this to say about the "White Horse Breakdown": "... this is Bill's number too. That's another number that he taught me years and years ago, and I just happened to remember it. He's made up hundreds of tunes, you know; you'll get to playin' those tunes, and some of 'em will stand out in your mind, and you'll get on one, and it'll just vary in your mind, and you'll eventually record it. I've dug up several old numbers of his." Norman Blake recorded this tune on his *Directions* album.

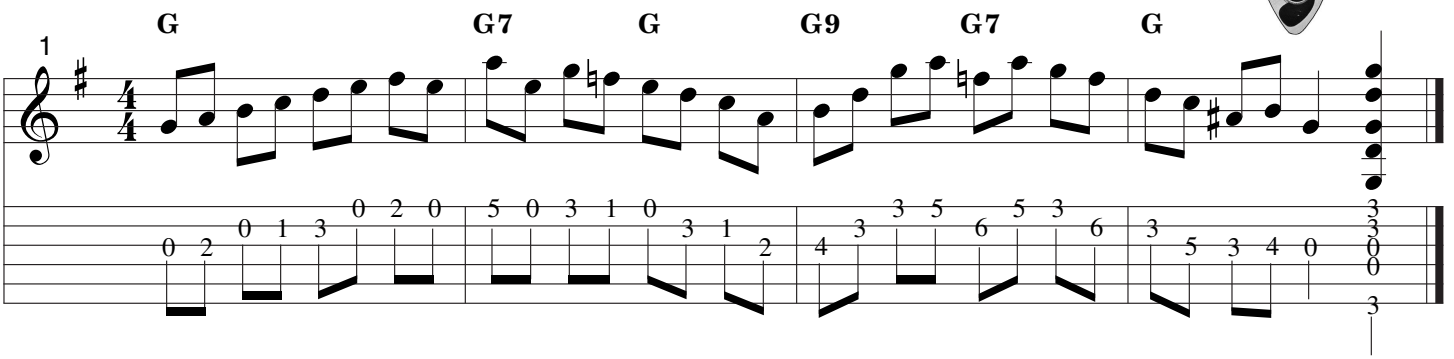
The version that I've transcribed below is fairly close to the way that Kenny recorded the tune, with some ideas from Norman Blake thrown in to make it more "guitaresque." Note that the chords reflect the melody and offer opportunity to vary the rhythm.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

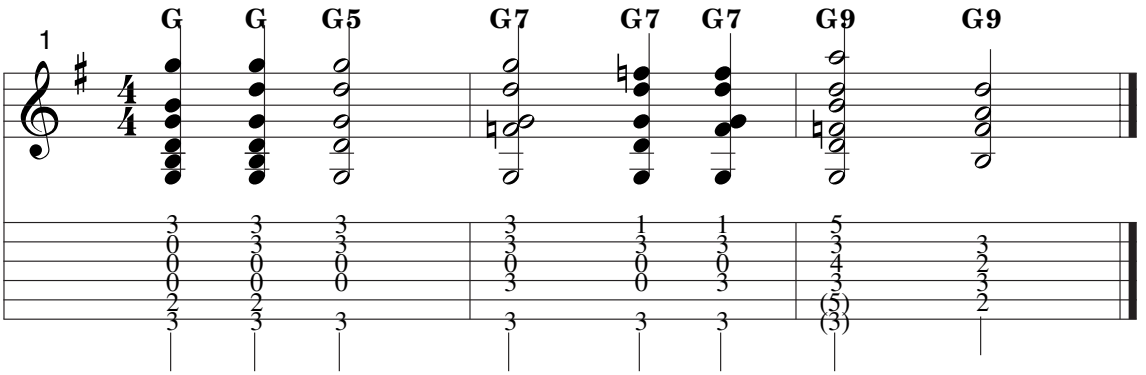
Mike lives in Woodland Park, Colorado, where he plays bluegrass and jazz, writes, teaches, and studies music. Watch for his band, the Bertye Maddux Band, coming soon to a festival near you. You can visit his web site at http://home.rmi.net/~madflatpicker01/index.html The band schedule, sound bytes, photo's, and email addresses are found there. Drop him a line with questions or comments via email, or c/o this magazine.

Exercise 1: G Major, G7, G9 - the "super 9" lick

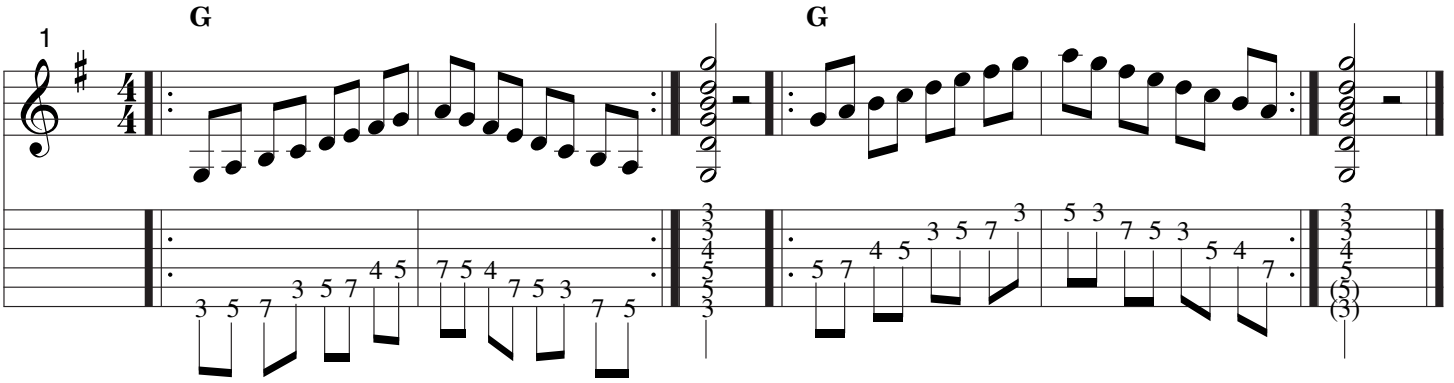
Audio CD
Tracks 33



Exercise 2: G Major, G7, G9 Chord Forms

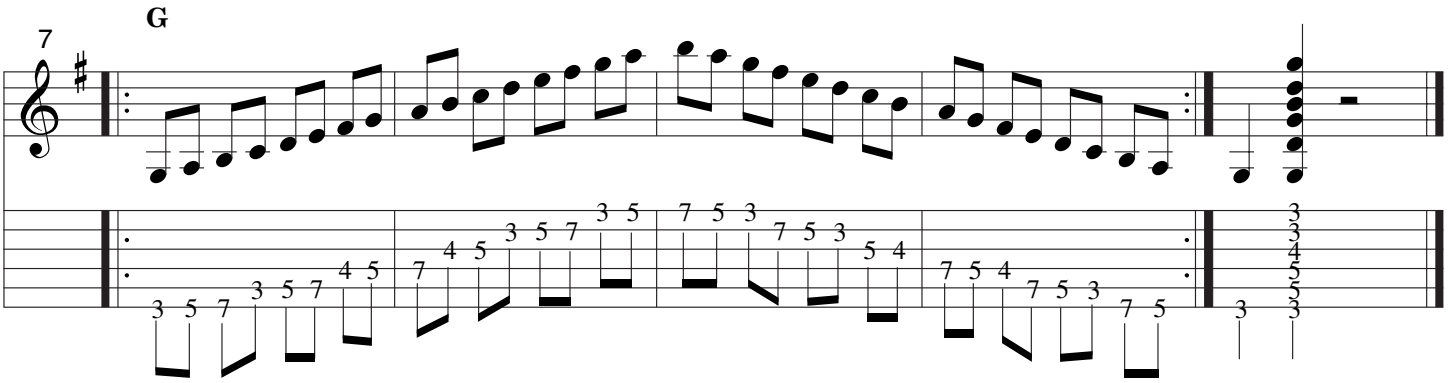


Exercise 3:
G Major Scale - III position - lower octave



Exercise 4:
G Major Scale - III position - upper octave

Exercise 5: G Major Scale - IV position - two octaves



Audio CD
Tracks 34-36

White Horse Breakdown

Arranged by Mike Maddux

Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Some of the songs in this column have been pretty challenging lately, particularly those arranged in chord/melody style. To help rectify that, here's a fairly easy arrangement of "The Old Rugged Cross," a song that's more than just a staple in gospel repertoire; it's regarded as the most popular hymn of the twentieth century. Arranged mostly on lower neck in a combination of Carter and chord/melody styles, a little challenge is included here and there, and the arrangement can be played either as a solo (as you'll hear on the accompanying audio CD for this issue), or with accompaniment.

The story behind "The Old Rugged Cross" is interesting. It was written by George Bennard in 1913, when he and his wife were officers in the Salvation Army. What prompted him to write it was a personal experience which caused him to reflect seriously about the significance of the cross, and on what the Apostle Paul meant when he spoke of entering into the fellowship of Christ's suffering. As he contemplated these truths, he became convinced that the cross was at the very heart of the gospel, rather than just a religious symbol. He wrote the melody first, and after struggling with the lyrics, he described how he completed the piece: "The words of the finished hymn were put into my heart in answer to my own need."

"The Old Rugged Cross" is another of the older hymns that relies to an extent on diminished chords, except with one difference: they're only an issue for anyone accompanying you, because they're barely hinted at in the melody. The measures containing them are 2, 4, 10, and 12.

Also in regard to the diminished chord measures, notice that measure 10 contains a slide from 4th to 7th fret, and measure 12 contains a slide from 3rd to 6th fret. I call these to your attention since it's important to execute the slides accurately because the slide origins and destinations are melody notes.

Three other areas worthy of mention are measure 23 (which contains a rather unorthodox pull-off from the third string 5th fret to open) and measures 25 and 29 (both of which contain slides from 3rd to 5th fret). Although the tab doesn't show this (one of the shortcomings of any tab system), in measure 25 the idea is to play the second string 3rd fret, and then slide both second and fourth strings from 3rd to 5th fret. At the instant you arrive at the 5th fret, then play the fourth string. Something similar happens in measure 29, except in reverse; here, the fourth string is played first, not the second. If all that seems like hieroglyphics, the CD will clarify both operations.

That's it for this time, except to mention that we've started a slow jam in our area, primarily for folks who've had little or no opportunity to play with other musicians. 40 to 50 guitar, mandolin, and banjo pickers attend each and every session, and everyone is having a great time. If you'd be interested in beginning something similar in your area, just write or e-mail me for info. Hope you enjoy "The Old Rugged Cross," and please visit us at www.lewalt.com.

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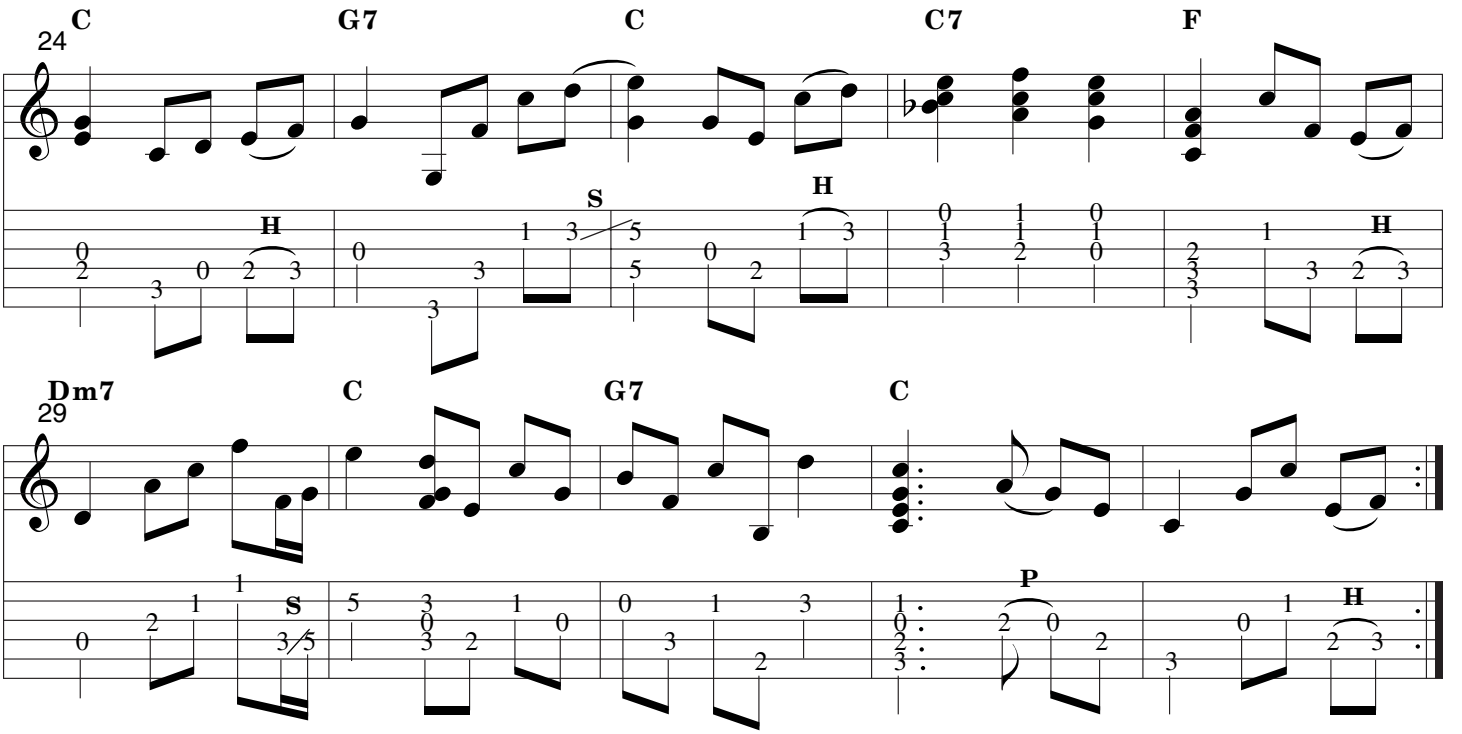
Old Rugged Cross

Arranged by Harold Streeter

Old Rugged Cross (con't)



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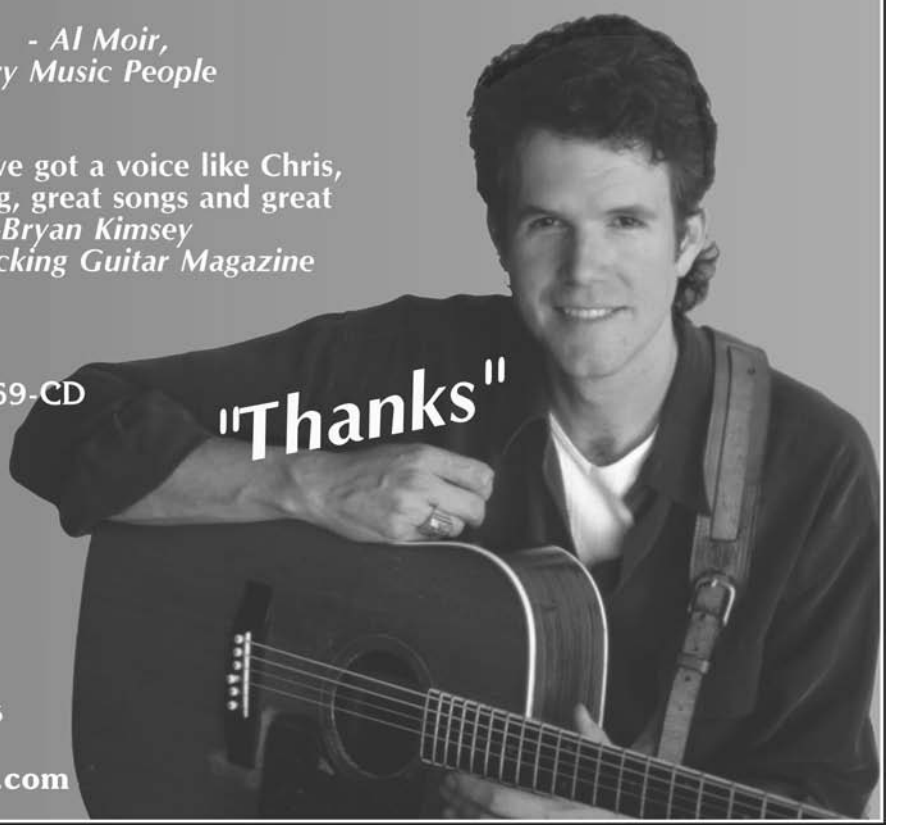

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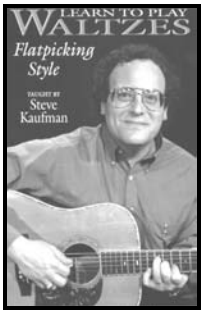

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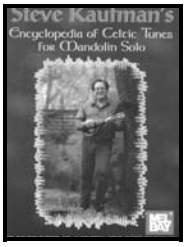

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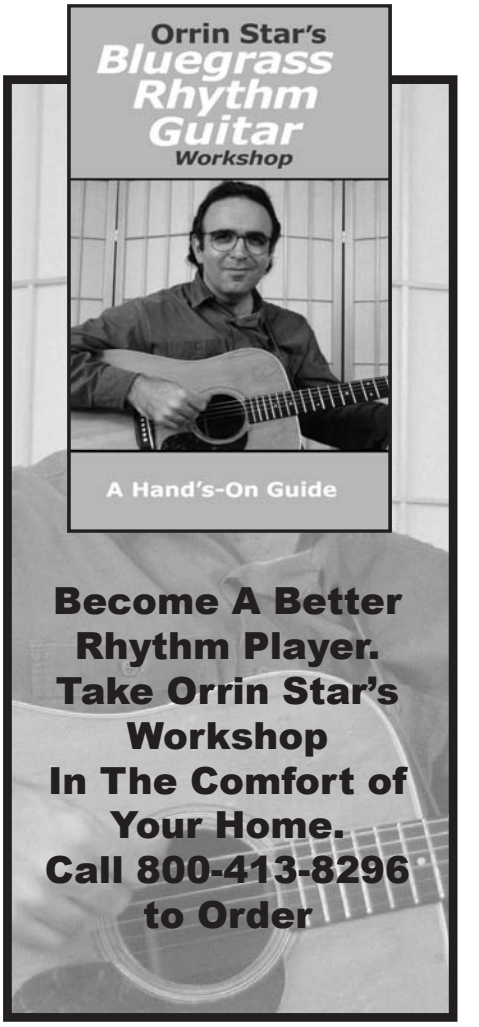

Audio CD
Track 44

Minuet

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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

FOR THE BIRDS

Greetings, fine-feathered flatpick friends one and all. With the coming of spring, it seems only fitting that we turn to things avian. I hope I'm not tweetering on the brink of disaster by presenting yet another cutesy-theme column. There are some self-appointed talon scouts out there that would tar and feather me for this, but I am an old coot without egrets. You can grouse and snipe and cluck your tongues if you want; you may even think I belong in a nuthatch, but I'm going to swallow hard and try not to finch. (This is an inauspicious beginning, *nest ce-pas*?)

Okay, on to business: I'd like you all to learn these tunes. ***Now!!*** (Sorry. I had to yell in case you're hard of heron...) Now, I'm not hawkish on repertoire building, but on the other hand I don't exactly have a "sparrow the rod and spoil the child" attitude about it either. I'm just a believer in learning new tunes, and have been ever since I was a pimple-faced tanager (indigenous to North American households).

So don't be a dreadnaught dodo (a bluegrass birdbrain? a fiddle tune featherbrain?): pick up your purple Martins, or your sunburst Gibsons, or whatever you play, and get to work. After all, do you really want to spend the rest of your life playing "She'll be cormorant the mountain when she comes. . .?"

READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

Our first ornithological offering is a Texas/Oklahoma tune which I learned from "Wild" Bill Reser at the Little River Bluegrass Festival in Oklahoma back in 1970. Bill was a preacher when he wasn't fiddling and a fiddler when he wasn't preaching. Among other invaluable services to humankind, he taught me that rhythm guitar was supposed to contain booms and chicks and not eighth notes. (I had been a banjo player for the past four years and didn't quite get the fine art of accompanying fiddlers on guitar.)

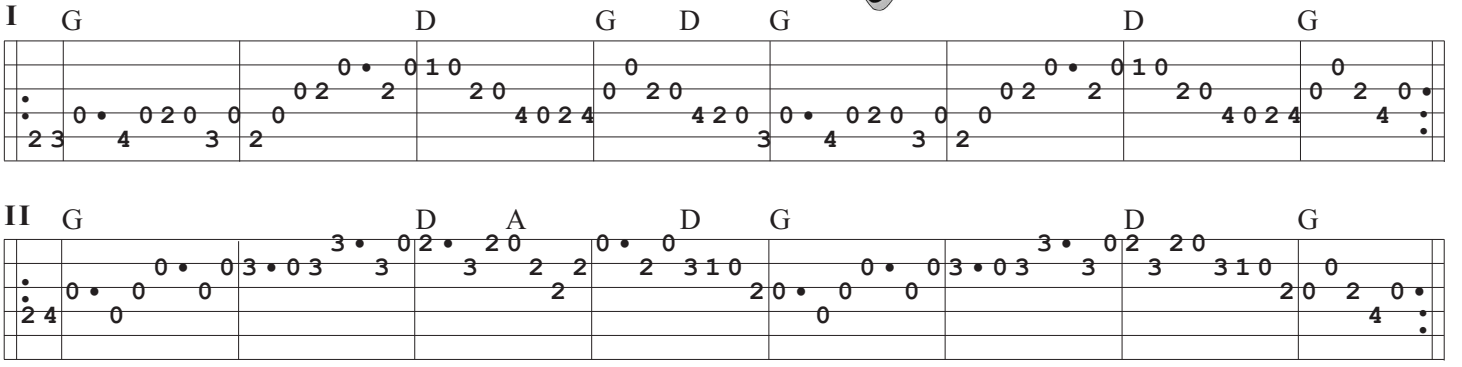
This tune is sometimes called simply *Redbird*, not to be confused with the *Redbird* I included in the "Red" column of *FGM* V7 N1. Not much voodoo to this one. The first part is very scalar and the second is very arpeggial. And about that flurry of three-note clusters in the second part: pick these "down-up-down, down-up-down" for good syncopation.

All right: let's do some learning!

Audio CD Track 41

OKLAHOMA REDBIRD

KEY: A (2)



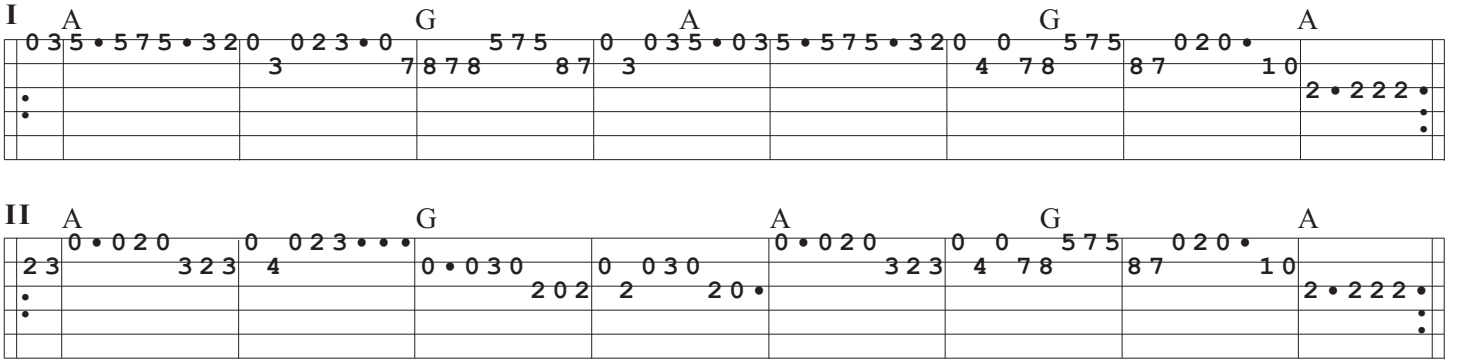
That shouldn't have been too hard, unless you're a complete birdbrain. One quick music theory note: The progression for this tune contains a (capoed) A chord, which might normally be called a two chord, being one step above the one, or G, chord, but it's actually a five of five, *i.e.*, the five chord of the five chord. Ex-bandmate Molly Mason, who now plays with fiddler Jay Unger, always used to correct me on this, and I am now passing that wisdom along to you.

Second, we have a nice old tune which I got from the playing of Henry Moore. This is a sort of rarity, in that it's an A tune in an uncapoed setting. Your right hand is going to be moving laterally a lot on this one; you'll find lots of rests and open strings to help you in this. Observe that the G note played on the eighth-fret B-string, which recurs throughout the piece, can be played on the third-fret of the E-string, if you've been doing your stretching exercises and can make a five-fret reach with your left hand. (That's the way I play it on the *FGM* companion CD.)

Audio CD Track 42

DUCKS ON THE POND

KEY: A



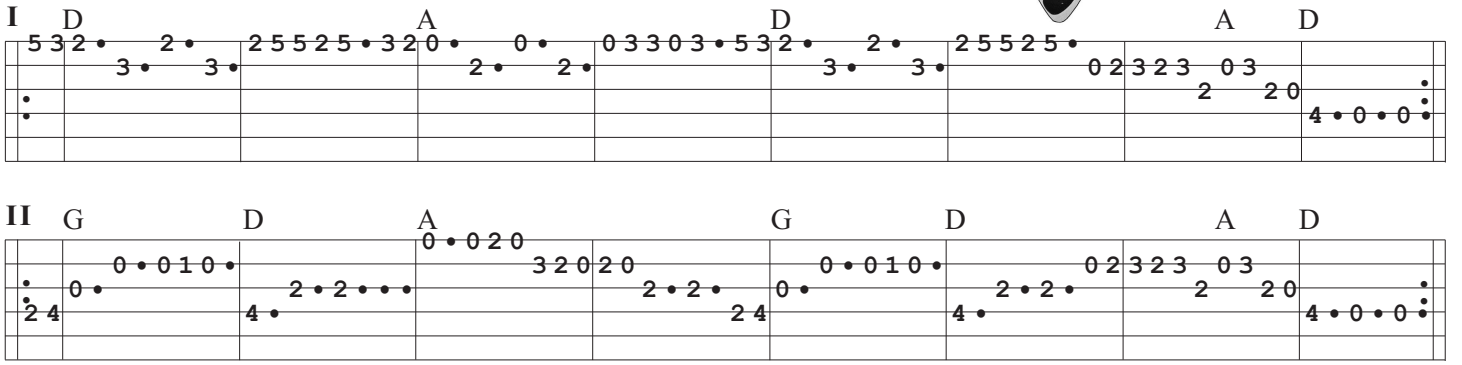
Before we go further, let's have yet another short chat about the malleability of chord progressions behind fiddle tunes: There are as many ways to chord *Ducks on the Pond* as there are varieties of North American Warbler. The A chord in the fourth measure, for example, could happen at the beginning of that measure, and the G chord following that at the beginning of its measure. If you do run into someone else who plays this tune, they're almost certain to have a different way of chording it. *Caveat picker*!

I have an interesting story about our third offering, *Jaybird*. The Powdermilk Biscuit Band, ex-house band for *A Prairie Home Companion*, was going to perform this piece on the show. We had a highly arranged version in which I was supposed to start and play the first part all alone. As Garrison Keillor asked us what we were going to do, and bandmate Bob Douglas introduced the tune, I realized in a panic that I could only remember the first three notes of the tune—the two pickup notes and the downbeat note. On a wing and a prayer, I played the four count "potato" intro, launched into the three notes I could remember of the tune, and through some combination of serendipity and good karma the rest of the tune came to me. You won't have that problem because it's all writ out for you. Have at it.

Audio CD Track 43

JAYBIRD

KEY: D



As is generally the case with D tunes, there's some second-position (2nd-through-5th-fret) fingering here, in the first part. The second part can be played entirely in the first position if you want to grab those fourth-fret notes with your little finger, or you can use the abundance of rests and open strings to switch back and forth between positions (I'll generally pick the part all in first position once in a while just to make sure that I can, but in the heat of picking in a jam or performance will defer to the dual-position policy).

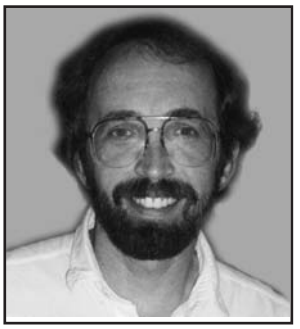
Okay, folks, that's our column for this time. It is an ongoing theme of mine to encourage all of us flatpickers to think outside the "*Red-Haired Boy*/*June Apple*" realm. These three tunes aren't flatpicked anywhere by anyone, and they should be. It's your job to broaden their migratory patterns, and it's not an onerous task: if you can't learn these tunes, I'm a pointy-beaked canyon-dwelling sulphur-bellied flycatcher.

Adam will be teaching this summer at Steve Kaufman's Flatpick Guitar Kamp in Tennessee, Camp Bluegrass in Texas, The Cross Ranch Bluegrass Camp in North Dakota and, perhaps, the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop in Washington state.

Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Foundation

by Steve Pottier



"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." —Professor Dumbledore to Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.

Last column I was talking about developing your own style, and about developing a foundation, a fundamental understanding of bluegrass style.

You do this by listening to the roots of the music. Trouble is, you heard Alison Krauss (for instance) and thought "that was great, I want to play some of that music" and now you'd like to find the roots of her music. Where is that? Most likely, most of the readers already know many of these sources, but maybe not everyone. Here are some recommended sources for listening. I've intentionally left out lead guitar stuff, maybe I'll make a list of that later. This is just stuff that a bluegrass musician will want to make a regular part of their playlist. Ask Alison. Ask Tony Rice. Ask Kenny Smith. Ask Tim Stafford. Ask David Grier. Ask Alison Brown, Lynn Morris, Chris Jones, or Bela Fleck. You get the idea.

Listening is enough right now. If you get to where you can sing along, so much the better. The more you do, the sharper your ear becomes, and the more you hear. I was trying to learn to sing 20/20 vision, and thought I had it several times, but on repeated listenings, I was hearing more and more subtle details that make a big difference from the "rounded off" version I first tried. It helps if you can listen with someone, especially if they've listened to a lot of bluegrass and can help point out interesting harmonies, or a particularly good lick.

If you initially stick with bluegrass from the '40s and 50's you will get a pretty good picture of traditional bluegrass. Newer styles began to appear in the '60s. This may be what attracted you to bluegrass in the first place! But consider this roots listening to be Bluegrass 101, and it can only make whatever style of bluegrass you play have more depth.

Bill Monroe

I think you must start with Bill Monroe. When I first heard Monroe I thought he was very abrasive and screechy. I came from a background of Perry Como and Dean Martin listening, so that reaction is not surprising. I finally got a friend to loan me a stack of Monroe records, and I was going to find out what the fuss was about. It took listening to both sides of a dozen records, but it finally started to get to me.

For me it's been a spiraling education ever since then, learning about bluegrass singing and playing, following a bad thread here and there, but more often finding that it was just me that need some ear training. I've often thought that opera would be the same for me—not my cup of tea now, but with the right introduction and perseverance it might be the next great thing!

The four Bear Family box sets of Monroe should be in the record library of every serious bluegrass musician, but it's a lot for starters. I'm going with the MCA box set of four CDs from 1936 to 1994. It's a great overview, with very thoughtful selections and a nice booklet. Extremely good value. Some very emotional, bluesy, intense music within this box set. This is a good first purchase.

Flatt & Scruggs

Leaving out the Bear Family sets, I'd recommend the two Mercury Sessions albums from Rounder and the Carnegie Hall album as being good all around representations of their repertoire. Consistently great band sound—let's see, they've got Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs on the team. I don't know if anyone could have screwed them up! Lester's guitar playing is sometimes difficult to dig out of the mix. Find a G run between phrases and try to follow it back down as it's volume goes back to blend in. Earl is a paragon of good taste, it's great to study how he approaches playing a break.

Stanley Brothers

Bear Family has a nice two CD set "1953-58 & 1959" that has a good cross section of the prolific Stanleys. *Stanley Brothers of Virginia Vol. II* (County) has some great Stanley style lead guitar playing on it.

Interesting how the guitar echoes Ralph's banjo playing stylistically, with a hard simple attack and quirky timing. Simple, yet the perfect thing to do. Heartfelt singing is the core. Listen for the kinds of things they leave out—the kinds of licks they don't play (why) as well as what they do play (lots of slides and bluesy stuff imitating the voices). How does the rhythm guitar differ from the Jimmy Martin or Lester Flatt sound?

Jimmy Martin

Fantastic Bear Family box set, but for a fledgling collection, I would recommend *Country Music Time*, *Sunny Side of the Mountain*, and *Widow Maker* as prime Jimmy Martin material. This is highly instructive material, very clear and powerful leads that are to the point—no monkeying around, we're talking big tone and big timing. GREAT band rhythm, worth a lot of study for bluegrass guitarists. The lead ideas are good models of bluegrass style, you can move a lot of non-guitar solos over to guitar, conceptually if not note for note.

Bluegrass Songbook

Pete Wernick's collection of songs, melodies, interviews and hints. Highly recommended.

Break Time

by Chris Jones

Striking Out On Your Own

You will notice that this column comes with no accompanying tablature. I'd like to assure you right now that it's not hidden cleverly in the magazine somewhere, or is only sent to select people that have renewed their subscriptions more promptly than others. The reason for the tab absence is that the subject for this issue has to do with your own breaks to songs, not mine. It follows then, that I can't tab out your breaks, since I have no idea what you're going to play (though I'm sure it will be well crafted, melodic, beautiful but not flowery, impressive but not too flashy, with just the right blend of Post-Crary, pseudo-Norman, Neo-Rice influences).

In workshops and classes that I do around the country, I stress the importance of learning scales and then utilizing the scale and neck knowledge that you have to be able to identify a song melody on it, even if your knowledge is limited. I'll be the first to admit to being no Joe Pass, but I can use what I do know to find "Pig in a Pen" right away if I need to (Joe Pass has probably never needed to find "Pig in a Pen," but you never know).

To some this subject may seem addressed to beginners, but I have taught numerous advanced students for whom this approach is new.

As an exercise, take the bluegrass song of your choice and sing it slowly (and quietly if you're self-conscious) while picking the same thing out on the guitar in first position. Even if you have no singing ability, you'll find that you have that melody in your head and you'll know when your fingers are confirming that. Just start with the first line and see how it goes. When you've got the whole verse down, just play it through several times until it feels comfortable. You've now arrived at the basic foundation of your break, without yet unloading your stockpile of hot licks yet.

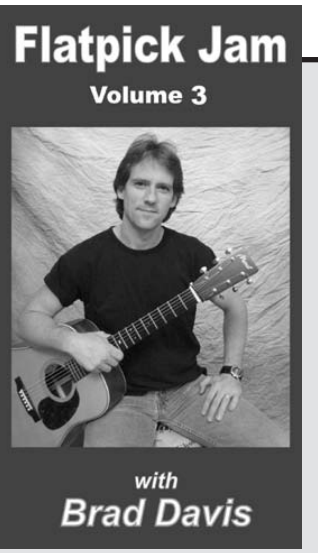
If you're not used to doing this, you'll find that with repetition, and moving on to other songs and keys, you've given yourself some basic ear training. You'll become accustomed to a certain melodic sound within a melody and be able to instinctively know where on the fingerboard you're heading. As a fringe benefit, you may find out that you're a better singer than you thought, too.

From this point, using a combination of lick and scale knowledge, you can begin to find ways to connect these melody notes together, or substitute for them where it's appropriate. Be mindful, though, of making sure it flows together and that the notes that make that melody what it is stay represented in some form.

You can sit down and put this all together at your leisure the way a composer would, except that there'll be no written music (and no royalties). This will remain just between your mind and your guitar. Because of this lack of a paper trail, though, you might want to record this, in case you come up with something you really want to remember.

If improvisation of your breaks is your goal, this is a good first step for that that too. You'll eventually find that with that melody in your head, and a close connection between your head and hands that you're developing, that you can find that melody on the fly and put it all together spontaneously. Improvising breaks in this way can be very fulfilling, and lead to some good music being made once you have the musical resourses to do it. It can also lead to wearing shades and a beret, but it depends on how far you want to take it.

For now, though, take it at the pace that works for you. Repeat after me (big G chord please!): "I've got a pig home in a pen..."



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Strong Fundamentals #2: Crosspicking

John McGann lives in the Boston area and is active in the Wayfaring Strangers, Rust Farm, and local Irish, bluegrass and jazz scene.

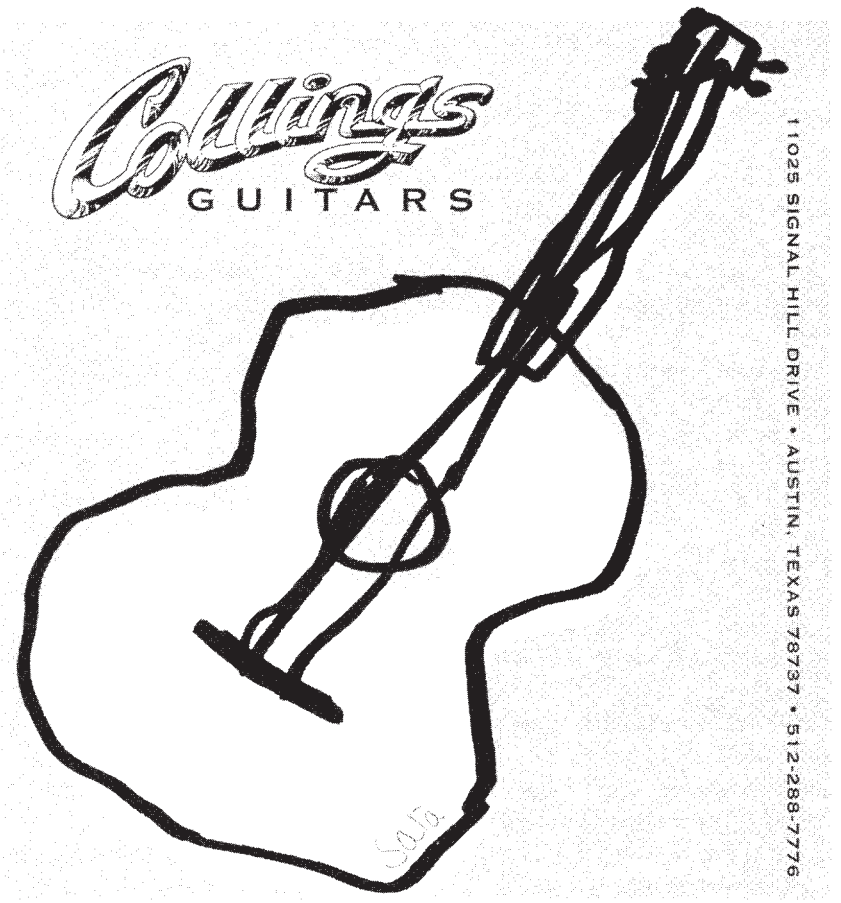
Crosspicking is a right-hand style that can break up the usual down/up pattern, if you choose to use alternate picking as a basis for your technique. This type of playing works great with chord positions where the notes can sustain and ring into each other. The great mandolinist Jesse McReynolds is one of the inventors of this style, as is George Shuffler on guitar. You can hear it at one time or another in the playing of most modern flatpick guitarists, and there are probably about as many approaches to it as there are players.

Many musicians, including Tony Rice, use a similar technique to crosspicking when soloing as well as playing rhythm; it is a common sense approach of playing downstrokes when heading toward the higher-pitched strings, and upstrokes when heading toward the lower-pitched. The great Gypsy/Django style players have yet another idea, which uses downstrokes even when switching to the lower-pitched strings, which allows them great punch and power, especially when trying to solo over 4 or 6 rhythm guitars at a campsite!

I am presenting four basic examples of crosspicking. The first is the forward roll, which is played with two consecutive downstrokes, followed by an upstroke. The three note pattern is repeated, followed by a two note "turnaround" to return to the start of the measure. Listen for the accents, then play the passage with alternating down/up/down/up strokes—you'll notice the emPHAsis is on the wrong sylLABLE. The downstrokes are naturally stronger-sounding than the upstrokes, so where they occur in the line will make a big difference in the rhythmic phrasing and articulation of the line.

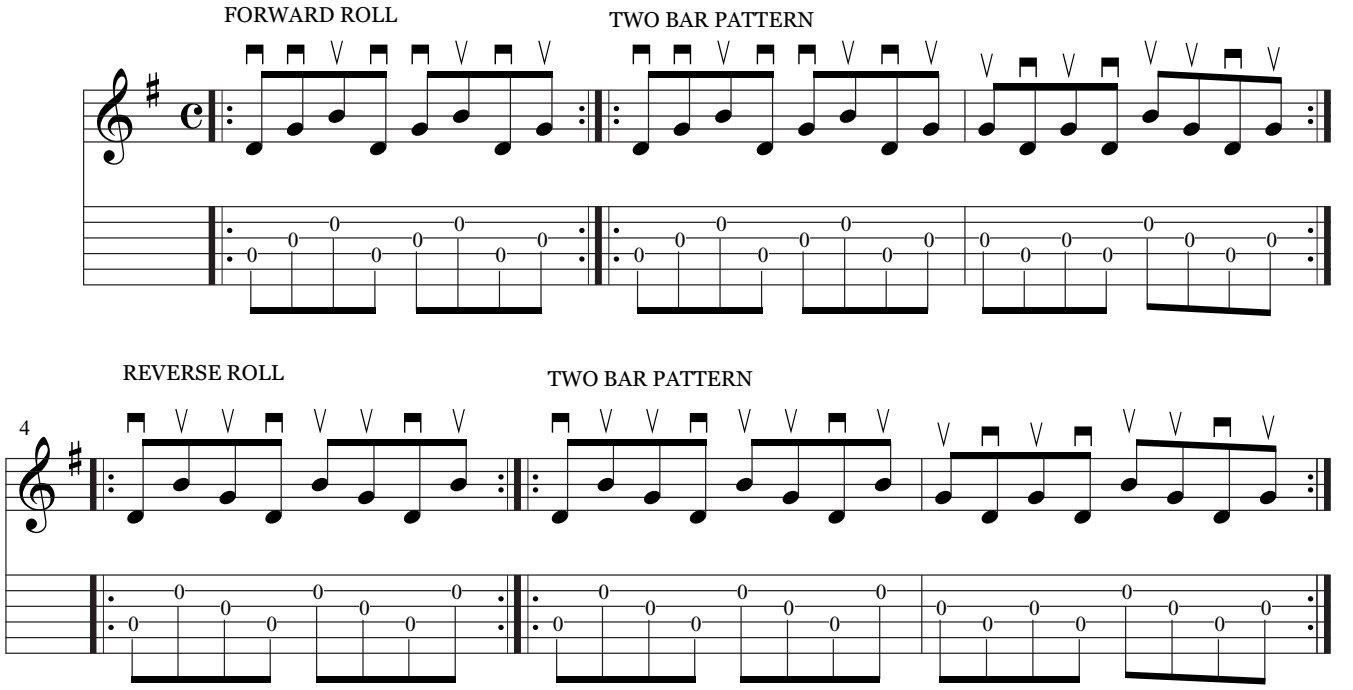
The second example combines the forward roll with a second bar phrased in a different pattern. Note the two upstrokes in a row on the 3rd string. There are other ways to play this as well, and as usual, no one right way that fits every situation. The next group shows the reverse roll in both a one bar and two bar phrase.

Once you feel comfortable with the basic rolls, try applying them to a tune. I chose "Banks of the Ohio" in C position, capoed at the 2nd fret. The recording is an improvisation, which by nature would vary from performance to performance. A good strong melody like this allows you to embellish it and still retain its character. Also notice the metronome clicking on 2 and 4, where the mandolinist would be laying the beat down. I have left out the pick directions, as once you have the basic rolls and idea of the technique, you can apply them as sounds and feels best to you.



Audio CD
Tracks 45-46

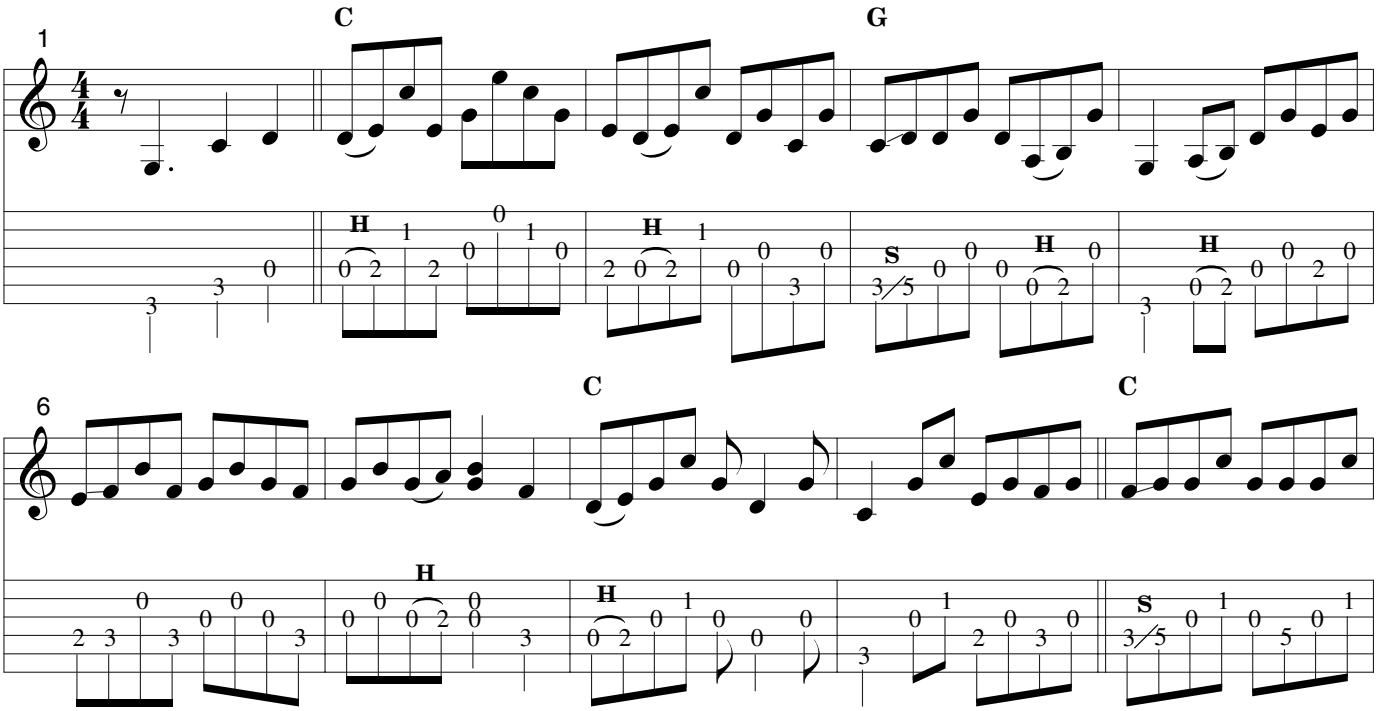
Crosspicking Patterns



Audio CD
Track 47

Banks of the Ohio

Arranged by John McGann



Banks of the Ohio (con't)

New Release Highlight
Eddie Collins: Rise & Shine

by Dan Miller

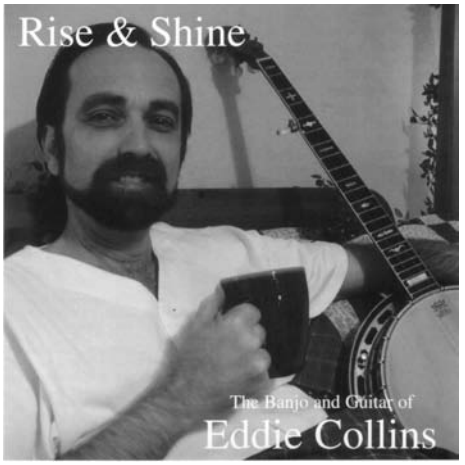
Breaking News: The cover photo for *Rise & Shine*, Eddie Collins' latest CD, shows Eddie holding a cup of coffee and (gasp!) sitting with his arm around a banjo! What is FGM coming to? Does this signal a new age of mutual coexistence? Well, just as there's a lot of buzz about those graphite guitars produced down in Louisiana, there should be a lot of buzz about Eddie Collins. Both provide us with a different way of looking at what we might think routine.

But let's back up. *Rise & Shine* showcases the talents of Austin, Texas-based multi-instrumentalist/songwriter/instructor Eddie Collins. It is truly a solo project: Eddie plays all instruments (banjo, lead and rhythm guitar, and vocals), and besides its great listenability it's also a great lesson for us guitarists to hear how to successfully interact with a banjoist.

The music sounds eerily sparse, though. To find out more, FGM caught up with Eddie Collins right after he finished hosting a successful Steve Kaufman Flatpicking Weekend Workshop and concert in Austin.

Born in Virginia but transported to Ventura, Southern California (about 60 miles north of Los Angeles) early in his life, Eddie spent most of his musically formative years in Southern California. He learned to play guitar during the Great Folk Scare of the 60s. "My early influences were the electric folk rock groups of the time, like the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, and the Flying Burrito Brothers," he recalls. "The Byrd's *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album was a special favorite. All these bands had musicians rooted in bluegrass. A local group, Fresh Air, had Pat Flynn as a guitarist, and that was one of my first exposures to this type of music live. Danny Wilson, who still lives in the area, was the first real flatpicker I heard."

By the mid-70s Eddie had picked up the banjo and mandolin. Around that same time he began accepting students. In the 80s Eddie was playing bass and electric lead guitar in country bands. "Billy Byrd, who was Ernest Tubb's guitar player, was another great musician. He had great simplicity in everything he played and had more influence on me than other flatpickers."



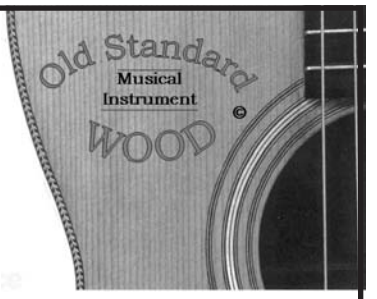
When asked to explain that "simplicity," Eddie paused. "Well, in a way the flatpicked guitar mimics the banjo: you've basically got eight notes to a measure with added notes filling in around the melody notes. Crosspicking emulates banjo rolls to get that shower of notes. But country music guitarists like Billy Byrd were not afraid to reduce the number of notes, to allow a note to ring out. There's a great simplicity in having a note sound, and a challenge in getting the dynamics of a few notes to relate to each other. Steve Kaufman was talking this weekend about 'tourist picking,' playing lots of notes without getting to the heart of the tune. I'd prefer to focus on and highlight a tune's simple melody. That makes a tune listenable. When you fill up a measure with notes, you quickly find a point of diminishing returns and you confuse the listener."

Eddie applies this sonic minimalism to his teaching. "Most new students want to come in and play fiddle tunes. That's great, but I prefer that they start with something simpler, like a G scale, and a simple melody that works out of that G scale. Once they've got the scale down solid, they have a basis for intelligent guesswork, where they can find melodies for themselves and not have to rely on tab so much."

Coupled with that, Eddie stresses listening skills. "From that finite set of elements, the notes in that scale, we can look for 'odd' notes or 'odd' chords: things that seem different in that song. A lot of bluegrass tunes are a I-IV-V progression, but look at a tune like 'Old Home Place.' You may not know exactly what's going on, but when you listen carefully you can clearly hear the odd—the different—chord or note. Then, since you know a specific set of elements, you can more intelligently guess what's going on." This focus on developing listening skills also helps Eddie's students see the relationships between similar tunes. "Look at 'Billy in the Lowground, in C, and 'Temperance Reel,' in G," he notes. "They begin as the same melodies, just in different keys." By encouraging his students to develop the ability to hear similarities in tunes, they grow more confident in their musical abilities. As a teacher, Eddie sees his role not as a "guru, but as a fellow explorer." Part of that role is also to help students realize the power of simplicity, whether flatpicking a lead or playing rhythm guitar, and to encourage their exploration of music beyond the fiddle tune. "Fiddle tunes are great, but if a guitarist focuses on just that with their emphasis on beats 1 and 3, they limit their abilities. In 'Crazy Arms,' which is a country swing tune, I only twice actually struck a note on beat one during the entire solo."

Asked about how the Internet functions as a teaching tool, Eddie responds, "Well, the tab that I produce and sell on my website presumes a certain level of experience. It's not beginning stuff, since tab can't tell you everything about a tune. My tab essentially presents how I play, and represents my style. I think that's pretty universal about tab in general: you have to know what the music sounds like in order to effectively use tab. But I have received a lot of great responses, especially from guitarists, who tell me that my audio materials really are like playing along with someone live."

"But in a way the Internet—and the abundance of learning materials we've got now in every possible medium—is maybe too much of a good thing," Eddie suggests. "I think that the effort folks used to spend in sitting next to the turntable, listening to a solo or rhythm pattern again and again until the record wore out, developed the listening skills I'd love to see in all my



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students. As a teacher, I have to be able to help my students realistically set their expectations, and that's where my focus on listening leads them. Getting good takes work."

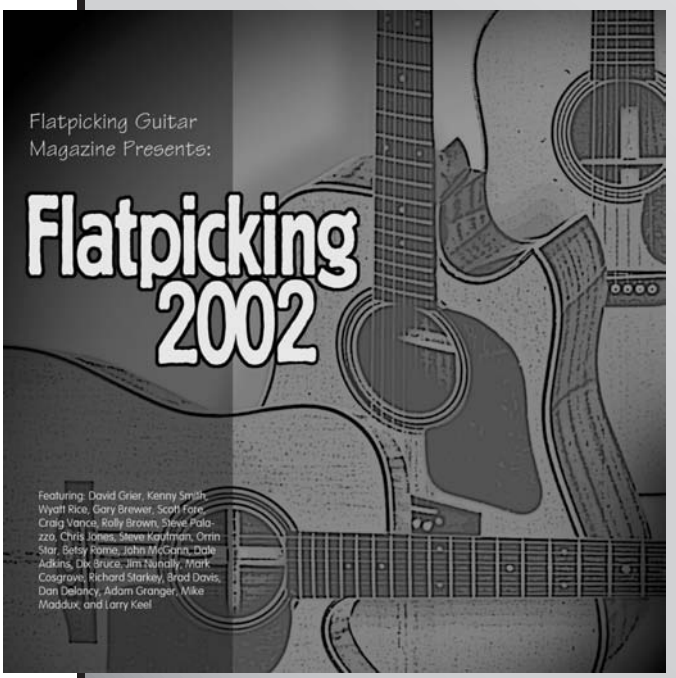
Eddie's CD exemplifies his musical philosophy. If you approach *Rise & Shine* expecting a whitewater ride down the Colorado, you will be disappointed. But if you sit back first thing in the morning with a cup of coffee and just listen to how Eddie crafts these tunes, you'll come away with an appreciation of a more leisurely pace to music. Listen to "Black Mountain Rag" or the interplay between guitar and banjo on "Banjo Signal." One of the great benefits of a solo effort like *Rise & Shine* is the control the artist has over all the instruments. Eddie carefully balances the lead and rhythm banjo work against the lead and rhythm guitar work. Even though there's only one person on all these cuts, you can hear a level of musical awareness that, once acquired, would benefit all players, regardless of instrument.

And for an added treat, Eddie's vocals are (as Eddie and Martha Adcock point out) reminiscent of John Hartford.

Eddie selected "Little Maggie" as the tune to be tabbed out and included on the audio CD accompanying this issue of FGM. Listen for those unabashedly sustained notes in his guitar lead, the understated rhythm backup and the sparse but immediately recognizable melody. In today's world of 400BPM quadruple pull-offs and triple hammer-ons, we need to remember that there is an audience out there who wants—who needs—simply played and easily recognizable tunes. As Eddie says, "just let the tune breathe."

For more information about Eddie Collins, check out his website: www.eddiecollins.biz.

Flatpicking 2002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9 *Cotton Patch Rag* **Orrin Star**
10 *Three Rivers* **Betsy Rome w/Too Blue**
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Little Maggie

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Reviews

Doc and Merle Watson
Lonesome Road/Look Away!
SMD 1977-2

Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

Anyone who thinks Doc Watson is strictly a "bluegrass" musician should listen to this CD, a "two-fer" CD combining 1977's *Lonesome Road* and 1978's *Look Away!* albums on a single CD. This isn't bluegrass by any stretch of the imagination, but rather, it has both feet firmly in the acoustic blues camp (and not even totally acoustic, at that). "Lonesome Road" is especially bluesy, with songs like "Minglewood Blues", "Mean Mama Blues", "Blue Railroad Train", "Ain't Nobody's Fault But Mine", and so on.

Not only are the titles bluesy, but the actual feel of the songs is unmistakably blues, complete with electric bass and heavy drums, punctuated by harmonica, slide guitar, and dobro. Whole lotta' slurs goin' on, baby! "Look Away!" is a little less bluesy, and even has some flatpicking tunes such as "Under the Double Eagle", but it's still bluesy with "Florida Blues", "Rangement Blues", and "Blues in My Mind".

As you might expect from the dates and the material, there's a lot of Merle Watson here. Merle died while I was in my heavy Tony Rice stage (and not listening to anyone else), thus I never really listened to him much. This CD is an opportunity to make up for that and let me tell you—Merle could flat get on it! His slide work is just outstanding, ranging from mean and nasty, to smooth and sweet in the flick of a pick. Merle also flatpicks quite a bit here and plays dobro, too. If you've never heard Merle this is a good CD to pick up. Oh yes, and Doc's here, too! Interestingly, though, what really shines here is not Doc's guitar playing, good as it is, but his singing. Doc can sing a really wide variety of material. He sounds like he means it on the "growling" blues songs, but he also sounds like he really means it on the gospel songs. I found myself listening mostly to Merle's slide work and Doc's vocal work rather than either's flatpicking.

Now, about that flatpicking....personally, I had a bit of a hard time getting around the drums and electric bass. Not that I mind those instruments, but, man, they're mixed high on this CD! With the right sound system this CD could shake the car next to yours at the stoplight. Consequently, the acoustic guitars sound thin and tinny trying to compete with that low-end. Given the material covered here, I'd almost have rather that someone handed Doc his old Les Paul instead of the Gallagher. Oh well, I guess it was the 70's and I shouldn't complain. Still, the highlights of the album for me were the few songs where the bass and drum went away and left Doc with his guitar and voice. Merle and Doc alone were really all these songs needed. Regardless, this CD is a good sampler of Merle's picking and Doc's singing. If you're lacking examples of either, check out this *Lonesome Road/Look Away*! Reissue.

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Randy Howard
I Rest My Case
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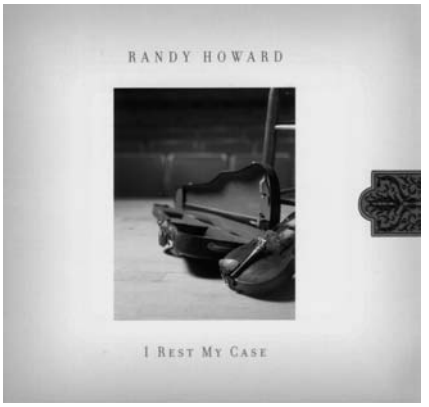

Reviewed by David McCarty

Randy Howard, in his all-too-brief career, earned a reputation as one of the finest fiddlers ever. Based on his countless championship titles, you could easily make the case that he was the greatest contest fiddler of all time. A multi-talented instrumentalist who also earned contest honors as a mandolinist and flatpicking guitarist, Randy Howard truly was a musicians' musician, in demand everywhere from the hottest jam sessions at Winfield to studio sessions for some of the leading country artists in Nashville.

He crammed so much music into his life early on, it was almost as if he somehow knew it would be cut short in his prime and he had to accomplish as much as he could in what little time he had. After a desperate battle against cancer, he died after being named IBMA Fiddler of the Year in 1999.

Although he recorded often in studio sessions, he did relatively little recording on his own. Prior releases are now highly sought after, so this new release on a major independent label will not only be welcome news to those already in awe of Randy's sublime fiddling, it should open the ears of a new group of fans who may never before have heard of him.

Recorded between 1996 and 1999, these sessions provided Randy with the chance to record with some of the best bluegrass and acoustic players not just in Nashville, but

the world. Free to choose the material and musicians he wanted, *I Rest My Case* has become his posthumous masterpiece.

It's not just the usual cast of Nashville and bluegrass luminaries here that makes this release so special, although they are out in force: i.e., Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush, Ron Block, David Grisman, Carl Jackson, Don Rigsby, Larry Cordle, Roy Huskey Jr., and Bryan Sutton. Through his creative will and artistic sense, Howard took this project beyond the realm of hot licks into something much rarer and demanding—great music.

For flatpicking enthusiasts, there's plenty of Sutton's cream-of-the-crop speed and lyricism to go around. He blazes through "New Camptown Races" in a solo laced with patented triplet runs and odd interval leaps. And for Gypsy swing enthusiasts, Howard teamed up with the great French Django-style soloist Romane for the enticing "Kansas City Kitty" and Howard's original "Sweet Bunch of Daises." Hearing Randy emulate the great swing violinists like Stephane Grappelli as Romane burns through scorching chromatic licks and dazzling chordal flourishes easily demonstrates why Howard was so highly regarded by fiddlers of all styles.

Kudos to Randy's longtime partner, bluegrass songstress and great rhythm guitarist Kathy Chiavola, for unearthing these sessions and making sure they were released. Thanks also must go to Sugar Hill Records, for believing in a project left behind by a departed artist who never achieved acoustic music stardom in life. Great work all around, and a project worthy of one of the greatest musicians ever to pick up a bow. (www.sugarhillrecords.com)

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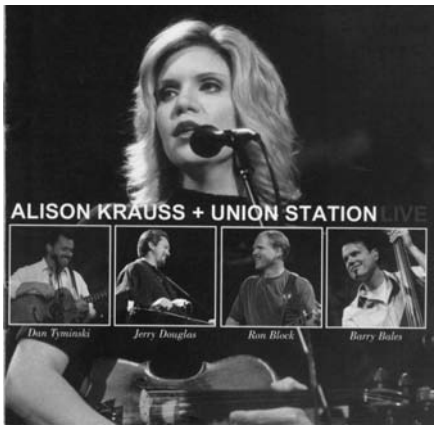

Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

Live albums should be an acoustic treat: not only do you get to hear most of a group's popular tunes, but a well-produced live album recreates the magic of a concert, drawing you in through the applause of the audience and on-stage chatter among the musicians.

Live (from Alison Krauss + Union Station, or AKUS) meets and exceeds any expectations you might have of AKUS. This is a superbly honed band enjoying itself, both feeding off and encouraging the audience's energy in the finest concert tradition.

For example, the second tune on Live is "Choctaw Hayride." If you have AKUS's *New Favorite*, you're familiar with the tune: a hard-driving bluegrass instrumental with leads bouncing between Jerry Douglas, Alison, Dan Tyminski, and Ron Block, all cemented together with a rock-solid bass line from Barry Bales. Dynamics are well-controlled. Way cool. But Dan starts off the live version with a rhythm beat on the guitar's E-string, a perfect anchor to Jerry's soaring resophonic work. Ron's banjo joins in, Dan drops to a tasteful background rhythm, and the tune takes a quantum leap when Alison and Barry join in. If you listen to both versions, Dan's lead is exactly the same; live, there's just a greater energy. And that's exactly what we want in a live recording.

AKUS is a special treat for guitarists. Ron Block does double duty as a guitarist, providing the lyrical James Taylor-esque guitar work that perfectly supports Alison's voice on tunes like "Let Me Touch You For Awhile," "The Lucky One," "Stay," or the eerie "Ghost In This House." But you've also got to listen to his lead work on "Faraway Land" to fully appreciate his abilities. Balance that with Dan Tyminski (already a cult figure in some guitar circles) with the previously mentioned introduction and lead for "Choctaw Hayride" or Dan's rhythm work on "The Boy Who Wouldn't Hoe Corn," "Bright Sunny South," or "Cluck Old Hen." Regardless of which style you prefer, there are auditory guitar treats a-plenty here.

Stir into that mix Ron's crisp banjo work, Barry's bass, Jerry's astounding resophonic work (Alison introduces him at one point as "the greatest Dobro player the world has ever known"), and Alison's fiddle and vocal work across a spectrum of tunes from hard bluegrass to mild country, and you've got one of the premier touring and recording bands in the country today.

Finally, a special credit to Bernie Velluti, who masterfully managed the sound in the Louisville Palace, where the concert was recorded.

I've always had several benchmark live albums in my collection: the Allman Brothers Band's *The Fillmore Concerts* (rock 'n' roll recorded on my birthdate), *Flatt & Scruggs at Carnegie Hall* (a chance to experience one of the smoothest seminal BG bands), and the Seldom Scene's *Live at the Cellar Door* (for the sheer exuberance of both the band and the audience). Two CDs, 100 minutes of great music: with Live from AKUS, I've just added another benchmark to the collection. At least I didn't have to get this one in vinyl first.

Song List: Let Me Touch You For Awhile; Choctaw Hayride; The Lucky One; Baby, Now That I've Found You; Bright Sunny South; Every Time You Say Goodbye; Tiny Broken Heart; Cluck Old Hen; Stay; Broadway; Ghost In This House; Forget About It; Faraway Land; A Tribute to Peador O'Donnell/Monkey Let the Hogs Out; The Boy Who Wouldn't Hoe Corn; Take Me For Longing; I Am A Man of Constant Sorrow; Maybe; We Hide & Seek; But You Know I Love You; When You Say Nothing At All; New Favorite; Oh, Atlanta; Down To The River To Pray; There Is A Reason

Musician/activist help keep music a global matter

Singer-songwriter announces The Second Strings Project.

For the past two years, Tangible Music recording artist, Darryl Purpose, and activist Kevin Deame have been running The Second Strings Project, a campaign to collect and distribute used guitar strings to needy musicians throughout the world. This effort will help keep musical creativity alive in countries where it might otherwise die.

Darryl and Kevin first met on the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament, a cross-country trek in the late eighties. The walk would continue one year later in the former Soviet Union. "I had taken three guitars for the band to use while there, explains Purpose. After I saw what some of the folks there were playing on, I felt compelled to leave those guitars there in the hands of people that not only could play them better than I could, but had played their entire lives on instruments that we would consider fit for beginners. Their passion for the music transcended the instruments they played on. It was a remarkable thing to see, how these instruments left there made a huge difference in these peoples' lives."

Later, visiting with the campesinos in the hills above El Salvador, Purpose saw how they made a guitar work against all odds—using a pencil as the nut of their acoustic guitar, with carefully carved notches in the pencil for the strings to pass over. "It seems that people will do whatever they have to in order to have music in their lives."

It's in that spirit that Darryl and Kevin are asking for help to make it a little easier for some of these musicians. "I want to do something, and think it best to start with modest ambitions. My idea is for people to save their used guitar strings. Many touring artists use a set of guitar strings for a few gigs and then change them, and throw them away. These strings are like gold in some places on this planet. Send them to me, and I'll get them into the right hands. Kevin makes many humanitarian trips to the very places I speak of."

Kevin explains, "I've been on about 15 trips mostly to Latin America (Mexico, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala), but also Russia, Latvia and Mali. I make a contact there and bring as much in the way of light, sterile medical supplies that I can carry. The strings would travel well being light and small, and as you know there are plenty of six string guitars out there with five stings on 'em."

In 1999 Darryl released a new album, "Travelers' Code." While touring the US in support of this release, he collected strings at his shows from those wishing to donate. His tour schedule, along with the project's continued progress may be accessed at http://www.darrylpurpose.com. Strings may also be sent to Kevin Deame, 28 Ladd Road, Ellington, CT, 06029. Donations should be labeled either as "sets" or "singles."

Companies or individuals wishing to participate in The Second Strings Project are encouraged to contact Tangible Music at 516.409.5433 or by e-mail at strings@tangible-music.com

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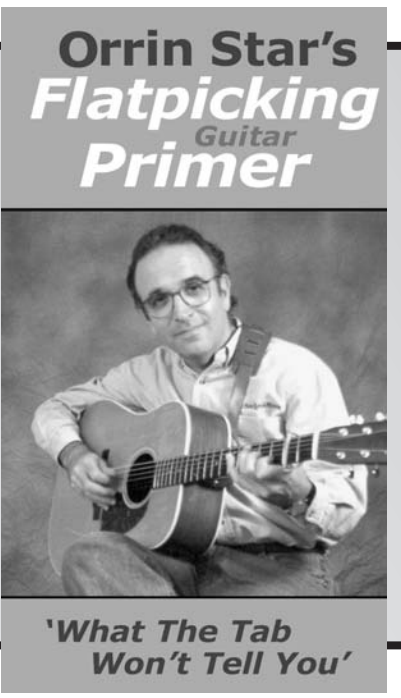

Practice Techniques

by Cathy Fink

Practice—Webster's Online Dictionary Definition
a : to perform or work at repeatedly so as to become proficient <*practice* the act> **b** : to train by repeated exercises

Practice is a loaded word. To some it is a joyful experience, to others a chore. When it comes to guitar playing, you get what you pay for. Yes, talent helps, but no serious guitar player can avoid practice for improvement.

Many people lack the tools and organization to make practice really work for them. We procrastinate, we postpone, we goof off and we play the tunes we already know over and over again. My partner, Marcy Marxer, and I teach at several of the summer music camps for adults (Steve Kaufman's Guitar Kamp, Swannanoa Guitar Week, Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, etc.). I decided to offer a class in practice techniques at the Swannanoa Guitar Week, thinking that it was a good idea, but not sure if anyone would be interested. It's not a sexy class like Al Pettaway's DADGAD or Robin Bullock's hot licks. I actually thought I might have a free period. I was wrong. The class had a good turnout with people of all levels who are looking for ways to improve not only their playing, but the discipline behind their playing.

So, lets start with the tools for practice.

Tangible tools:

- Listening device—CD player, tape machine, etc.
- Recording device—cassette machine, mini disk, etc.
- Half speed device—this might be your tape machine or a computer program. There are many tools out there these days to slow down music for you to learn from.
- Decent strings
- Metronome
- Electronic tuner

Intangible tools:

- Good practice space—a place where you enjoy playing, get some peace and quiet and few interruptions from phone, fax, kids, etc.
- Good practice time—You pick the time that works for you. Before work? After work? Lunch break in the office?
- Commitment to practice time

I am a firm believer in making commitments in writing. Think about your practice time and possible schedule. Think about how much time each day, every other day, or whenever, that you can commit. Then, write down a possible practice schedule. You can always adjust it in writing as you figure out what really works. The point is, if it's in writing, you are articulating that commitment in a more tangible way. You can always do more, but make a written commitment about your minimum.

Your practice schedule becomes even more useful if you outline your goals each week in practice. Perhaps you are working on a very challenging piece that you are learning a few bars at a time. It is easy and tempting to practice things you play well over and over again. Creating a schedule allows you to enjoy those pieces while pushing yourself to work on new material. Your practice schedule might look like this:

- 10 minutes—warm up with chord changes to metronome
- 10 minutes—scales with metronome
- 20 minutes—3rd and 4th bars of new tune
- 10 minutes—try fitting those bars into the whole tune
- 10 minutes—free play time

Total: 60 minutes

Remember, this is a sample. You can create the schedule and length of schedule you want. It's a good idea to create warm up time, time to work on new music, and timed to enjoy what you already play.

One valuable practice skill is the art of critical listening. That is, critical listening to yourself. Let's not assume the word critical is negative. Think of this as a positive process of listening to your playing on tape, mini disk, etc. and being specific about what you like about it and what needs improvement. Try to isolate the things that need improvement so they can become the focus of your practice, Later, you can re-record those things and listen back and see if they are sounding the way you want them to. Some of the things to listen for are:

Tone
Intonation
Timing

There is no better way to improve your timing than to practice with a metronome. It's challenging. In the studio, our mantra is "Think of the click as your friend." Like a mirror, the metronome does not tell lies. Recording your playing with a metronome reflects an accurate image of your ability to play in time. Even seasoned players find this challenging, but face it, if your timing is not solid, your music is not solid. I often simply play chord changes and basic fiddle tunes to the metronome as my warm up. Besides practicing timing, it increases my sense of focus on the activity of concentrating on my playing and listening at the same time.

Speed is something guitar players often strive for. If you can't play in time at slow or medium tempos, it's unlikely that you'll play in time at faster tempos. Again, the metronome can help you increase your speed incrementally. Take a piece you are working on, or a scale, or a set of rhythm changes and start at a tempo that feels easy for you. When you are locked into the click and you are comfortable, bump the click up a number or two and see how you do. Over the course of days, or weeks, continue that process. When you move up to a tempo that you can't stay solid on, bump back again. When you try this again the next day, start a few numbers slower than your last number the day before, and gradually increase. Over the course of days or weeks, you will improve both your timing and ability to play clean at a faster speed.

Suppose you listen back to your practice tape and you are not getting the sound you are looking for? You might be able to analyze why and work on new techniques. If not, you may want to find a teacher who specializes in the style you are working on and get an outsider's help in creating the sound you want.

It is important to practice manageable sections of music at a time. Several of my students stumbled through 3-4 minute pieces of music, stopping and starting, flowing through the easier parts and stumbling through the harder ones. I advised them not to feel obligated to play the whole piece. Play the piece until you hit a stumbling block. Then, focus on that stumbling block-take the measure or two before it, that section, then a measure afterwards and create a drill for yourself where you are simply drilling that isolated section. Repeat, repeat, repeat, until it starts coming easily. Eventually, you should work towards fitting it into the whole piece of music without stumbling.

You are going to have an easier time learning a new piece if you have listened to that piece enough times to know it. If you read music, this is less important. I play completely by ear and rarely sit down to learn a song or tune without having committed it to memory. I listen to it over and over again until I can sing it-whether it is an instrumental or vocal piece. Then, when I begin working on the guitar arrangement, I have already learned the tune. My fingers know what they are looking for and I can hear if I have found the right guitar notes/chords by singing the tune and hearing if I am on the right track.

Many beginners are in a hurry. They want to play the fast, flashy tune ASAP. Teaching banjo, I have suffered through many a student who wanted to play "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" fast, before they had the left and right hand chops to pull it off. Take your time. It ain't music if the tuning, timing and technique aren't there. At guitar camps, I often lead slow jams, giving new students a chance to practice in a group, take a few chances without being heard, and get in the groove of playing with other folks. You might even be able to start your own slow jam. Talk with a local friendly music store that has a teacher you like. Perhaps you and a bunch of friends can offer to pay that teacher to lead a slow jam. You pick the songs. They lead the jam at a slow tempo, call out the chords and help keep the fun going. Some of these slow jams happen in restaurants or bars, with a nice back room, make it both a social event and a fun practice event.

Let's face it. No one can make you practice. It's up to you. But if you can make the commitment and organize your time, you may find that progress comes more easily, leading to more enjoyment playing the guitar.

Other resources:
My students recommenced these books:
Zen Guitar by Philip Toshio Sudo, published by Fireside
Beginning Guitarists Handbook by Jeffrey Pepper Rogers, published by Stringletter

Cathy Fink is a 30 year veteran of the folk scene. She has produced over 50 recordings and with her partner, Marcy Marxer, has earned five GRAMMY nominations. Her most recent CD is "Postcards," on the Community Music, Inc. label. www.cathymarcy.com

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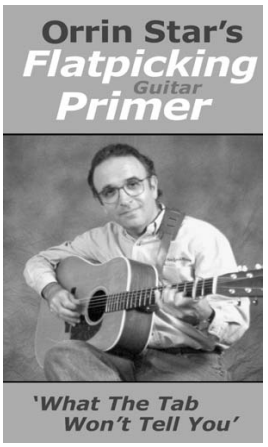

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"My friends all laughed when I said 'I'll sing harmony.' But they didn't know my secret..."

I never was any kind of singer, I could play a few instruments okay, but when everybody leaned their heads together for some harmonizing, I just didn't fit in. I couldn't hear what vocal went where! I just figured it took talent to be able to sing harmony, & I didn't have it.

Then I met this guy at a festival. We were doing a little shade-tree picking, & he was singing wonderfully. When we finished "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," he asked me why I didn't join in on harmony.

"I can't harmonize," I said. "I didn't want to mess up your singing by sounding like a bullfrog in heat."

"Sure you can harmonize! Why, I'd even give you this guitar if I can't teach you right now how to do the tenor harmony!"

Well, he had me singing a good tenor harmony so easily I just couldn't believe it. Singing harmony was a skill, not a big mystery!

"How did you learn to teach harmony like that?"

"It's not hard," he replied. "let me loan you my CDs, and you'll see my secret."

He handed me a CD pack entitled "How To Sing Bluegrass Harmony." I never bought a mial-order course. I just couldn't thrust I'd get good instruction from something I couldn't try out right away.

He told me, "This course came with a guarantee...if I didn't think it was good within 10 days, I'd get my money back. And it couldn't hurt to try it with a guarantee!"

"But you could sing harmony a little, so you could learn quicker--"

"nope! I sang harmonhy like a bullfrog in heat, too!"

We laughed, and he left me with a cheerful, "Try those tapes out."

Well, I played that course all the way home in my car, and I sang til I was hoarse. I sure felt like I was learning... but the real test was yet to come.

Next Tuesday I met with my pickin" buddies, like I always do. Just before we started "Fox On The Run," I told my friends I was going to sing harmony. They all laughed (I knew they would), and Charlie cracked, "What kind of harmony? Froggy tenor?"

"Let's just do it," Isaid. "I got a surprise for you boys."

They kept giggling, but you should've seen their faces when I started singing harmony. They were amazed. Charlie even accused me of getting 'harmony surgery.' Naturally, they all wanted to learn my secret. I just smiled, and said "Harmony singing is a skill as much as a gift. And this course got me working my skill the right way."

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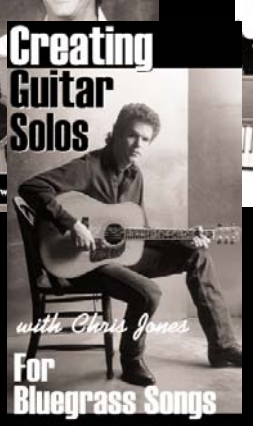

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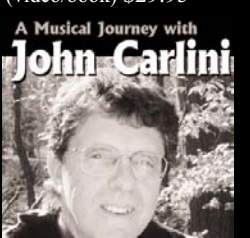

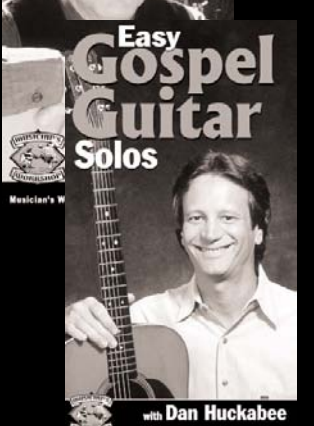

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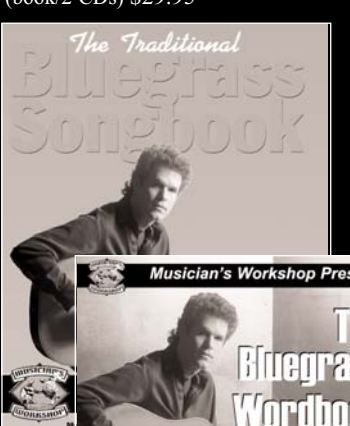

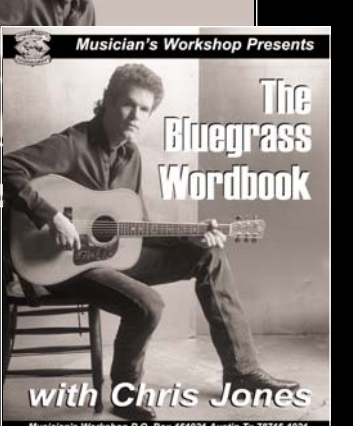

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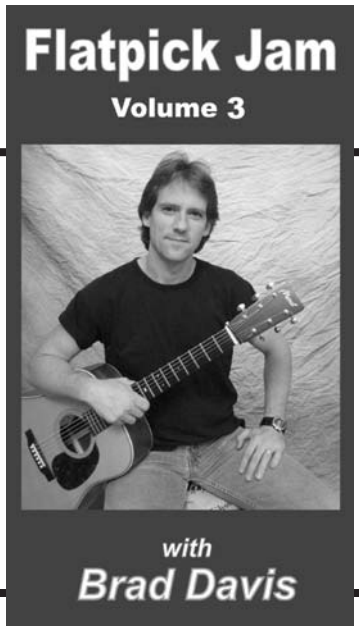

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